Islam in Soviet Tajikistan:

State Policy, Religious Figures and the Practice of Religion (1950-1985)

Sultonbek Aksakolov

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in History

2013

Department of History

School of Oriental and African Studies

University of London

Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

I have read and understood regulation 17.9 of the Regulations for students of the SOAS, University of London concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

This thesis explores the history of religious life among Muslim communities in Soviet Tajikistan from 1950 to 1985. The analysis of the history of religious life of the Muslim population during this period is contextualised within the background of changing Soviet religious policy and its implementation in Tajikistan. The thesis seeks to explain how and why the interactions between the various actors in the field of religious policy affected the implementation of unionwide decrees and decisions in the distinct religious context of the Soviet peripheral regions. In so doing, it also examines how Muslim religious figures functioned and how the communities in Soviet Tajikistan practiced their religion in the context of continuous administrative pressure and atheist propaganda.

With the formation of special councils and various commissions under the local government, the Soviet state succeeded in creating a bureaucratic system for the analysis, monitoring and regulation of religious activity. Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis suggest that in the specific local context, the implementation of Soviet religious policy was dependent on how the officials representing the state and the religious figures representing religion understood and carried out this policy.

The practice of obligatory religious rituals by both state officials and ordinary people in turn blurred the dividing line between the strata of population defined as Muslim believers, the clergy and Soviet officials. The thesis reveals that religious practices and activity evolved in various ways in the context of continuous surveillance by the state. Muslim religious figures in Tajikistan like their fellow clergy in other parts of Soviet Union used different strategies to integrate and adapt themselves to the changing state religious policy and social transformations.

Acknowledgements

Studying for a PhD was a lonely endeavour and a long journey, taking me from a remote village in Tajikistan to bustling cities and centres of learning. I could have not completed this thesis without the support I received during my study.

My largest debt is owed to the Institute of Ismaili Studies, which provided me with a full scholarship. My desire to study for a doctorate would never have been fulfilled without this scholarship and the encouragement I received from staff and colleagues. I am therefore extremely grateful to the director of the IIS, Dr. Farhad Daftary, and its former director, Professor Azim Nanji, for recommending me.

I also owe a large debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Benjamin Fortna, for his encouragement, and guidance at every stage of my research. In the *adab* of traditional learning and respect, I would like to say 'thank you *okhon* Ben' for your advice and input.

I should also like to thank my colleagues, especially Wendy Robinson and Dr. Isabel Miller, for their invaluable support in reading my thesis and offering helpful suggestions. I am particularly indebted to Russell Harris for proofreading my thesis and for his meticulous corrections. My debt of thank goes to my colleagues at the IIS. I am grateful to my classmates and friends at SOAS, Nurmamadsho Nurmamadshoev, Alena Kulinich, Melania Savino and Phillip Wirtz for their remarks and company during my studies. I am also grateful to Dr. Shirin Akiner for her encouragement. My particular thanks go to Dr. Antony Russell for his remarks and corrections.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Professor Yaakov Ro'i who provided me with copies of the CARC archives for the Tajik SSR. I express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Stephane A. Dudoignon for the guidance he brought to my research. I should also like to express my gratitude to my former teacher and colleague Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov for his continuous advice during my study.

In Tajikistan, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Mahrambek Anwarzod, Mrs Gulsara Rahmatova, Haidarmamad Tawakalov and Elbon Hojibekov for their support in arranging interviews with a number of religious teachers and students of religious schools. I am also indebted to the interviewees who recalled their memories and experiences of religious life under the Communist system; they were not devoid of certain

nostalgia for that life of peace and stability. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the Khorog Research Unit for their warm welcome and for sharing information.

I should also like to express my deep appreciation to the staff and researchers at the regional archive in Khorog, and the state archive in Dushanbe for the support they gave me during my archival research. I am also very grateful to Professor Muso Dinorshoev at the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, as well as to Dr. Ramazon Nazariev and Dr. Lolo Dawlatbekov for their encouragement. I should also like to thank the staff at the archives of GARF, RGANI and RGASPI in Moscow, Russian Federation. I am grateful to Sulaimon Shohzoda, Ubaid Okimbekov, Tohir Qalandarov and the late Boghshoh Lashkarbekov, as well as to my friend Palla Palalev for their support during my field research in Moscow. My largest debt of gratitude is to my late teacher, Professor Nisormamad Shakarmamadov at the Institute of Humanities, in Khorog, who set me on the path to academic research when I was still an undergraduate student. He was not only my first academic supervisor, but also the humblest and kindest mentor one could ever have.

I also owe a large debt of gratitude to my closest friend Nazarkhudo Dastambuev for his continuous support and his warm hospitality in Dushanbe. I remain grateful to my friends Majnun Majnunov, Sherozkhon Qizilov, Munosib Madimarov and Dr. Amirsho Lashkariev for sharing the difficulties and joy of this research. My special thanks go to my relatives in Moscow for hosting me during my field research. I am also extremely thankful and indebted to all my family members, especially my sister Sayorakhotun Aksakolova, who has taken care of my parents in my absence. I must thank my wife for taking care of my son, whose smile and happiness is my constant source of inspiration and joy.

My parents brought me up in the spirit of sharing and caring. They encouraged me to be industrious in the Soviet school system. Most of all they were happy to see me learning *musulmoni ilm* (Islamic knowledge). My late father set me on this particular path of learning from the time I was in secondary school by taking me to the *okhon* (teacher of religion). It was my father's deep religiosity, which inspired me to study the Muslim experience of Soviet rule.

It is to my parents, to my late father, and to my mother, that I dedicate this thesis. I alone am responsible for any mistakes in this thesis.

Abbreviations

BMDJT: *Boygonii Markazii Dawlatii Jumhurii Tojikiston*

CARC: *The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults*

CRA: *The Council for Religious Affairs*

GBAO: *Gorno-Badakhshanskaia Avtonomnaia Oblast'*

GA GBAO: *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti*

GARF: *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii*

RGASPI: *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii*

RGANI: *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii*

Tajik SSR: *The Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic*

Notes on Transliteration and Names

The archival and interview materials used in this thesis were mainly in Russian, Tajik and Pamiri languages. I have modified the Library of Congress system of transliteration from Russian (Cyrillic) into English and I represent ‘й’ as (i); ‘я’ as (ia); ‘ю’ as (iu), ё as (io) and ‘ы’ as ‘y’. Otherwise I follow the standard Library of Congress system for Russian words and terms.

Russian and Tajik orthography requires only capitalisation for proper names. For this reason I have not capitalised the title of books, articles and other documents in the footnotes and bibliography. When transliterating the names of place, individuals, religious, cultural and official terms from Tajik and Pamiri languages, I have endeavoured to reflect their pronunciations. For example, I write the words *jamo‘at-khona, qozi, imom* and *mullo* as they are pronounced in Tajik. The exceptions are the administrative names of administrative districts and provinces, such as the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Shugnan, Murgab, Rushan, and proper titles such as the Ismaili Imam, for which I have used standard English spellings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Religious life in Soviet Tajikistan as in many other parts of the Soviet Union underwent considerable transformation due to changes in the Soviet state's religious policy. From the establishment of the Soviet government in 1917 to the early 1940s; the Muslim population of Tajikistan experienced the destruction of such important resources as its religious schools and literature, as well as the repression of its religious leaders. During the Second World War, the Soviet state tempered its repressive religious policy to allow religious believers to open places of worship and resume their religious activity. In the larger context of the Muslim-populated republics of the Soviet Union, this change in religious policy prompted the opening of significant numbers of mosques and an increase in religious activity.

In 1943, the Soviet government responded positively to the request of the leading Muslim *dukhovenstvo* (clergy) from Central Asia to establish a religious administration, which was known as SADUM.[1] This directorate become responsible for supervising the activity of Muslim clergy, and transferring donations from the official registered mosques in different parts of Central Asia to its headquarter in Tashkent.[2] The activities of SADUM were in turn monitored by the Council for the Affairs of the Religious Cults (CARC) that was established in Moscow in 1944.[3]

Over the course of more of than four decades, the CARC and later CRA worked to ensure the compliance of religious believers with the Soviet legislation on religion and attempted to secure a legal but limited space for religious activity. The religious activities of the Muslim population of Tajikistan in this period, like that of most believing citizens of the Soviet Union, became subject to continuous study and monitoring by the special

[1] SADUM-from Russian *Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana* (Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan).

[2] Yaakov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From World War II to Perestroika* (London, 2000), pp. 104-105.

[3] *Sovet po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR* (The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults) (CARC) under the Council of the Ministers of the USSR was formed in May 1944. A separate council to regulate religious activity among Orthodox Christians i.e., The Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) was formed in 1943. In December 1965 the two councils were merged into *Sovet po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR* (The Council for Religious Affairs) (CRA). The CRA was dissolved in 1991. The abbreviation of CARC will therefore be used in this thesis for the years from 1944 to 1965 and CRA for dates from 1966 to 1985.

upolnomochennye of CARC in each republic and province.[4] On the ground, the various bureaucratic bodies of the local government and the Communist Party continuously monitored the religious situation.

This thesis examines the history of the religious life of the Muslim population in Tajikistan from 1950 to 1985. It looks into the religious history of the Muslim population from two distinct but interrelated aspects: a) the implementation of Soviet state religious policy among Muslim communities in a particular province of Tajikistan, and b) the ways through which Muslim communities practiced their religious rituals in the context of state regulation and delimitation of the influence of religion. It therefore seeks to explain how the various actors, the state officials and religious figures in the specific cultural and religious landscape, implemented and adjusted the state religious policy. In so doing, it also analyses how the ordinary population, state officials and religious figures defined their relationships with the Soviet state and with their religious tradition and community performing religious rites.

Studies on Islam in Soviet Tajikistan

The various aspects of religious life among the Muslim population in Tajikistan have been tackled in the general scholarship on religion (Islam) and its place in Soviet society. Inside the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (Tajik SSR), the Soviet atheist-oriented research appeared in various forms, such as academic monographs, propagandistic and polemical pamphlets about Islam, articles in newspapers and journals, in particular *Agitator Tadzhikistana*.[5] In the propaganda field, the main concern of the experts on atheism was to highlight the progressive Soviet state ideology, which treated religion as a reactionary force. Religious rituals were depicted as 'vestiges of the past' and 'traditionalism' that were expected to disappear under the influence of scientific advances.[6] More precisely, researchers in this field focused on indicating the 'anti-social activities' of the religious

[4] Studies on the CARC archives translate the word *upolnomochennyi* (lit. plenipotentiary representative) into English variously as commissioner or bureaucrat. Throughout my thesis, I often use these three terms interchangeably.

[5] *Agitator Tadzhikistana* was an atheist propaganda magazine published fortnightly in Tajik and Russian, and which promoted atheism over religious issues, views and practices.

[6] R. Mawliutov and R. Majidov, *Islom* (Dushanbe, 1980).

figures who were involved in healing, shrine pilgrimage and worship across the Tajik SSR.[7]

Like the propaganda literature, academic research, in particular Soviet ethnographic studies, also attempted to provide more practical solutions to eradicate 'harmful religious customs', especially their survival in the family milieu and society in general. The main findings of most of the Soviet ethnographic research were to demonstrate that as a result of socialism the indigenous people in the provinces of the Tajik SSR, had moved away from 'patriarchal and feudal relations' and primitive economic relations towards socialism, by-passing the capitalist stage of development.'[8] The increase in the research on religious views and practices suggested that the Soviet scholars knew about the strong presence of traditional practices in the Muslim-populated republics of Central Asia.[9]

Through systematic analysis of the local sources on religion in Soviet Tajikistan from 1960 to late 1980, Muriel Atkin rejected the different assumptions of some media and political analysts, which predicted the spread of an Islamic revival from the Middle East to Central Asia and Caucasus and its threat to Soviet rule. Her case study of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan pointed out that religion was not going to be a driving force to challenge Soviet rule in this particular republic. Atkin's analysis was not, however, linked to the religious situation in other Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.[10] Nevertheless, her study stressed what the Soviet atheist-oriented analysts themselves acknowledged, namely, that religion (Islam) had a strong presence among the various Muslim groups in Tajikistan.

The details of ritual performance and the activities of religious figures provided in the Soviet atheist-oriented and ethnographic research served as first-hand information for Western scholarship on Islam in Central Asia. As Mark Saroyan pointed out, Soviet

[7] It was estimated that dozens of doctoral dissertations were written between the years 1965 and 1980, several of which were on Islam in Central Asia, see the review of atheist research on religion in Tajik SSR, in Muriel Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan* (Philadelphia, 1989), p. 45.

[8] L. F. Monogarova, Preobrazovaniia *v bity i kul'ture pripamirskikh narodnostei* (Moscow, 1972). About the development of Soviet ethnographic studies on Tajikistan, see for instance the article by L. Monogarova and I. Mukhiddinov, 'Etnographicheskoe izuchenie Sovetskogo Badakhshana' in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 352-384.

[9] Michael Kemper, *Studying Islam in the Soviet Union: Inaugural Lecture* (Amsterdam, 2009), p. 17.

[10] See the review of Atkin's book by Beatrice Forbes Manz, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1991), pp. 471-473.

research on Islam provided Western researchers not only with empirical data but also with a theoretical framework to interpret the practice of religion. Western scholarship on Islam highlighted the fact that Islam as a tradition represented a past phenomenon and often remained opposed to the Soviet regime.[11] Similar arguments about religion, including Islam being a remnant of the past feudal-system were made by the Soviet scholars. Saroyan's analysis concluded that religion was not a fixed phenomenon, but had been reproduced and reconstructed by Soviet Muslims as a new social identity.[12]

Introductory information and statistical data about the Muslims of Soviet Union and their educational attainment were provided by outside, including Western scholars.[13] However, the majority of Western researchers had neither the opportunity to observe the real life of Soviet Muslims nor did they have easy access to Soviet documents. In contrast to the detailed ethnographic studies of social transformation among the indigenous populations of Central Asia, Western scholarship provided rather broad analyses of the entire region. Produced at a distance, most of the external writing about Islam in Soviet Central Asia, including the Tajik SSR, did not provide readers with a coherent picture of how did ordinary Muslim understand their religion, performed rituals or defined their Muslim and Soviet identities.[14]

---

[11] This criticism referred to bulk of literature produced by the Sovietologist school on Islam in the Soviet Union, including works of A. Bennigsen and Ch. Lemercier-Quelquejay,'Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR,' *Religion in Communist Lands*, 3 (1978), pp. 153-161; A. Bennigsen and E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley, 1985); and Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington, 1986).

[12] See Mark Saroyan, 'The Reinterpretation and Adaptation of Soviet Islam' in Edward W. Walker ed., *Minorities, Mullahs and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 64-94.

[13] See Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London, 1986).

[14] An anthropological study by Gillian Tett of the marriage system in a Tajik village provides an interesting discussion of how the Muslim population in the last years of Soviet rule, during the *perestroika* (restructuring) era reconciled their Muslim and Soviet identity in a 'single world view and society'. See Gillian Tett, 'Ambiguous Alliances: Marriage and Identity in a Muslim Village in Soviet Tajikistan', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 1996), p. 197; A study by Gabrielle van den Berg on the performance of minstrel poetry among the Ismailis of Badakhshan also offers a detailed analysis of *maddoh* (performance of religious poetry) among the Ismailis of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province in the late Soviet period and the immediate aftermath of independence in Tajikistan. See Gabrielle van den Berg,

Western scholarship on Islam in Soviet Central Asia also focused mainly on highlighting the threat posed by this religiosity to the integrity and security of the Soviet state.[15] This view about the 'Islamic threat to the Soviet Union' provided a basis for misinterpreting the revival of religious life in the former Muslim republics of Central Asia as the 'rise of fundamentalism'.[16] The political developments in Tajikistan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the formation of the Islamic Renaissance Party, provided a good case of this misunderstanding of the position and role of religion. These views about the rise of Islam in politics often sidelined an understanding of the cause of political turmoil in independent Tajikistan, which had deep roots in the existing regional, clan, economic and social divisions dating to the Soviet period.[17] The various aspects of religious life in Tajikistan, such as the link between Islam and politics, Muslim identity, the influence of religion on youth, the organisation of the Muslim community and the practice of rituals have been explored in a number of anthropological and political studies in recent years, which have provided a general account of religious life during the whole Soviet period.[18] Nevertheless, most of these studies provide limited reference to the changing Soviet religious policy and its consequences for Muslim communities in the post-Second World War period.

This thesis examines the particular period of the implementation of Soviet religious policy among Muslim communities in Tajikistan. It is therefore more relevant to locate my study

---

Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study into the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan (Wiesbaden, 2004).

[15] Will Meyer, *Islam and Colonialism: Western Perspectives on Central Asia* (London, 2002).

[16] See Anna Zelkina, 'Islam and Security in the New States of Central Asia: How Genuine is the Islamic Threat', *Religion, State and Society*, 3-4 (1999), pp. 355-372.

[17] Valentin Bushkov and Dmitri Mikulskii, *Anatomiia grazhdanskoi voiny v Tadzhikistane: Etno-sotsial'nye protsessy i politicheskaia bor'ba, 1992-1996* (Moscow, 1997); Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?* (London, 2001) and John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 200-205.

[18] See for instance, recent studies on the Ismailis of Tajikistan by Jonah Steinberg, *Isma'ili Modern: Globalisation and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Otambek Mastibekov, *Leadership and Authority in Central Asia: The Ismaili Community in Tajikistan* (forthcoming); and on Muslim youth in post-Soviet Tajikistan, see Colette Harris, *Muslim Youth: Tensions and Transitions in Tajikistan* (Oxford, 2006).

within the literature on the post-Second World War history of Soviet state policy towards religious societies and particularly how the central decrees and decisions were carried out in a specific ethnic and religious context on the Soviet periphery.

The Muslim communities in the Tajik SSR, like any other believing citizens of the Soviet Union, shared a common experience of state institutionalisation of their religious activities in the period after Second World War. In this respect the literature on the process of implementing Soviet secular and anti-religious policy in its different multi-ethnic and multi-religious parts suggests important and interesting comparison for my thesis. Studies on the history of Soviet religious policy, Islam, and the institutionalisation of Muslim life from 1941 to 1991 have all pointed to the changing nature of Soviet religious policy under each phase of its leadership as well as the complexity of carrying out this policy in each of the Muslim-populated republics.[19] A detailed examination of the official institutions that promoted legally supervised religious figures and mosques in Central Asia pointed out their successful collaboration in this field.[20] In the Tajik SSR, a number of religious figures in the legalized mosques benefitted from this official institutionalization and education through SADUM.[21] Stephane Dudoignon's study revealed that a distinct form of religious revival took place among the Muslims of the Tajik SSR from the post-Stalinist years to the

[19] For more on the development of Soviet religious policy under its different rulers, its different ways of implementation by local government organs, and consequences for religious communities, see the analysis of CRA archives by John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge, 1994). For the detailed analysis of archival sources on Soviet policy towards Islam, see Yaakov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: from World War II to Perestroika* (London, 2000). Reviewing this book, Devin DeWeese contended that Roy's study resulted in repeating the terms and framework through which the authors of Soviet archival reports approached their subject. In DeWeese's view, a critical analysis of the Soviet archives and concepts requires clarifying them through use of the vocabulary borrowed from the field of Islamic and religious studies. See Devin DeWeese, 'Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaakov Roi's' *Islam in the Soviet Union*', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3 (2002), pp. 298-330.

[20] Eren Tasar has provided detailed analysis of the Communist Party and CARC archives regarding the collaboration of the commissioners of this council with SADUM's affiliated religious figures, in the Central Asian republics Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in his thesis, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', unpublished PhD thesis (Harvard University, 2010).

[21] See Alowiddin Nazarov, 'Istoriia religioznoi zhizni musul'man Tadzhikistana v 1941-1991', unpublished candidate dissertation (Dushanbe, 2004) on the role of SADUM in supervising the activities of the official mosques in Soviet Tajikistan.

1980s, due to the activities of the various protagonists in informal education circles and Sufi networks.[22] In his analysis of state archives on Islam in the Soviet Union, Ro'i provides some references and a brief account of the activity of Ismailis in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Tajik SSR.[23] In this thesis an analysis of state documents will be combined with data from oral interviews to look into the little-studied case of the implementation of Soviet religious policy in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of the Tajik SSR in the years from 1950 to the 1985. This analysis of the history of Soviet state policy, in particular as regards the Ismaili majority in this province, provides an important area for comparison to understand the recent process of institutionalization of religious activity by the nation-state and external religious institutions.[24]

My study of the state religious policy and Muslim institutions in Gorno-Badakhshan province will highlight many similarities and differences in the challenges and complexity of executing central Soviet policy by the local officials.[25] It will also reveal the different

[22] See, Stephane A. Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: The Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)' *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80.

[23] See pages on the Ismailis in Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 422-424.

[24] John Anderson, 'Social, Political and Institutional Constraints on Religious Pluralism in Central Asia', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 2 (2002), pp. 181-96. For more on recent religious changes, including the formation of religious institutions among the Ismailis of Tajikistan, see Jonah Steinberg, *Isma'ili Modern: Globalisation and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill, 2011); and Farhad Daftary, ed., *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community* (London, 2011). The Ismaili population has constituted the majority of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast since its establishment in 1925. As a religious community the Ismailis of Badakhshan are the *murid*s (followers) of the Ismaili Imam, Shah Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV, who is considered their spiritual leader. Throughout their history the Ismailis consisted of different branches and have been defined in various terms and names, such as *tariqa* or *madhab*, movement or sect. At present the community is known by its official name of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims or Ismaili *tariqa* when referring to their particular interpretations of religion. For more on the complex history of the Ismailis, see Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: their History and Doctrines* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007); The Sunni population of Gorno-Badakhshan are the followers of the *Hanafi* school of Islam. For more on the Sunni population in Gorno-Badakhshan, see N. Emel'ianova, *Darvaz: religioznaia i kul'turnaia zhizn' Tadzhiksko-Afganskogo prigranich'ia* (Moscow, 2007; and Frank Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan)* (London, 2006), pp. 221-242.

[25] For a closer comparison of how local authorities adjusted the rules and views of central officials in the field of religious policy, especially in the Muslim populated republics and provinces of Soviet Union, see Vera Exnerova, 'Caught Between the Muslim Community and the State: The Role of the Local Uzbek

levels of interaction and the dynamic relationships between the two often distinct and separate categories of state and religion through the agents representing them.[26]

It fact Muslims remained loyal to Soviet state ideology, although the state succeeded to a great extent in removing religion from the public sphere. The Soviet state isolated its Muslim population from the rest of the Islamic world.[27] This isolation itself points to the separation of religion from a society dominated by Soviet atheist ideology and education. As a result of this isolation, a distinct cultural experience emerged among Muslims of Soviet Union.[28] The Soviet modernization and secularization policies, however, provided space for the survival of the religion as a custom in some areas of Central Asia. In her study on religious influence among the population of Khorezm (Uzbekistan), Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi pointed out that religion had less effect among the population of this remote province. The reason for this weak influence of religion was the disconnection of the

---

Authorities in Fergana Valley, 1950s-1980s', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1 (2006), pp. 101-112; and for the differences in the views in religious policy by central policymakers and local authorities, see Sonja Luehrmann, 'A Multireligious Region in an Atheist State: Unionwide Policies Meet Communal Distinctions in the Postwar Mari Republic', pp. 272-301 in the study by Catherine Wanner, ed., *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (New York, 2012).

[26] The fundamental point of the 1918 decree on the separation of state from religion (church) not only remained an unchanged principle for official bodies dealing with religious policy but also found its reflection in academic studies on religion. The distinction between religion and state informed the various themes of atheistic and academic research on religion (Islam) as a reactionary phenomenon, with its dogmas and practices opposed to the modern science and social change in the socialist state. For more on the Soviet anti-religious (Islamic) discourse see, V. Bobrovnikov, 'The Contribution of Oriental scholarship to the Soviet anti-Islamic Discourse: from the Militant Godless to the Knowledge Society', in M. Kemper and S. Conermann, ed., *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, (London, 2011), pp. 66-85; and for the comparative analysis of the conceptual dichotomies of religion (Islam) and modernization in Soviet state, see Mark Saroyan, 'Rethinking Islam in the Soviet Union', in Susan Gross Solomon, ed., *Beyond Sovietology: Essays in Politcs and History* (New York, 1993), pp. 23-52. Saroyan's critical analysis was mainly about the theoretical and empirical findings of Soviet and Western studies on Islam prior to 1991. In this sense, his criticism is relevant to re-reading the data produced by CARC commissioners, which highlight the division and distinction between the Soviet state and religion.

[27] See Adeeb Khalid, 'Being Muslim in Soviet Central Asia, or an Alternative History of Muslim Modernity', *Journal of Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 2 (2007), pp. 123-143.

[28] See Paolo Sartori, 'Towards the History of the Muslims' of Soviet Union', *Die Welt des Islams*, 50 (2010), pp. 315-334.

Muslim population of Khorezm from the mainstream Islamic teaching and *shar'ia*.[29] The consequences of Soviet religious policy in limiting the activity of religious figures and reducing the performance of religious rituals to a minimal level among the Muslim communities in the Tajik SSR cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, I also indicate that improving socio-economic conditions strengthened the social status of the religious figures within their community in this republic. Ironically, this situation evolved in the face of the continuous surveillance of religious activity as well as widespread atheist propaganda against the religious views.

The implementation of religious policy in different parts of the Soviet Union also had different implications for each of the diverse religious communities.[30] In Ro'i's analysis, the various organs of local government also behaved as obstacles to the cooperation that the central authorities desired to have with Islam.[31] Such instances also appear in the context of this study. However, considering the existing social and cultural context, the local government authorities provided a milieu for religious activity, which was more fluid rather than the limited central official framework for cooperation between state and religious institutions. In my analysis of the recent history of Muslim communities in the Tajik SSR, the concepts of state and religion are therefore used in a more elastic sense. The concepts of state and religion in this thesis are analysed in the contexts interactions and relations between the agents representing them, i.e. the local officials and the religious figures.

For this reason, it is important to draw parallels between the formation of modern concepts of state and religion in Soviet Union with that of other modern states. Studies on religion and the state in modern China, for example, have highlighted the interaction between the various actors, the agents of the state and of religion, in implementing religious policy. In this analysis, the modern concepts of state and religion both appear to be in the process of formation, as does the institutionalisation of religious activity.[32] What makes the context of

[29] See Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, *Religion is Not So Strong Here: Muslim Religious Life in Khorezm after Socialism* (Berlin, 2008), p.13.

[30] *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union*, pp. 219-220.

[31] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 681.

[32] See Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, ed., *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford, 2009).

religion and state in modern China and the Soviet Union comparable is that in both countries the state and the ruling Communist party with their anti-religious ideology and policy; envisaged a limited space for religious activity. However, unlike in modern China, there were not multiple actors, organisations and individual religious institutions in Soviet Tajikistan. Yet the existing cultural context and religious traditions provided a space for officials and religious figures to form their own understanding of state religious policy and religious activity.

Using information I have extracted from Soviet archives, I indicate how and why local officials and religious figures played roles such as intermediaries between what was considered state policy and religion in the particular socio-cultural and economic context of the Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan. In many parts of the Soviet Union, the various agents or social actors in the field of religious policy, as well as ordinary believers, did not remain passive recipients of the state's anti-religious policy and ideology. Some of these cases have been examined in recent studies.[33] While the impact of Soviet religious policy differed in each decade following the Second World War, my thesis also demonstrates that over this period there was a nuanced implementation of central state policy in Gorno-Badakhshan.

The various actors, i.e., the officials, religious figures and ordinary community members in this province, had their own ways of adjusting to and adapting state decrees and decisions. As can be gleaned from the archival sources under study here, they had to consider the local situation and especially popular ties to tradition, authority and the local circumstances, rather than what was stipulated by the decisions and decrees from the top and by state legislation. I analyse the activities of the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan and their collaboration with local officials against the backdrop of the formation of the Soviet state in its peripheral territories. The implementation of religious policy in this province was part of the larger ideological and socio-economic policy taken by the Soviet Union to transform indigenous societies with distinct traditional customs and ways of living.[34] As an analysis of data under study indicates, the registration of religious

[33] See Catherine Wanner, ed., *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (New York, 2012).

[34] For more on the socio-cultural and economic transformations in Soviet Badakhshan, see R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985).

figures, the bureaucratization of religious policy and its administration through local government were all part of the formation of the Soviet state in its borderland areas.

Muslim Experience of Soviet Religious Policy

The study of the history of religious life among the Muslim population of Tajikistan needs to be located within the context of general Soviet state rules and decrees in the field of religious policy. It was against the backdrop of the legislation and decrees of the Communist Party and the Soviet government that the religious policy in the various republics and *oblast*s (provinces) was applied. The change in the state religious policy towards the believers during the Second World War led to an increase in religious activity, which alarmed the state, causing it to renew its repressive measures by closing down religious societies, including mosques, from 1947 to 1953. In the years between 1953 and 1959, some concessions were made again to religious believers, but these were in turn followed by a more aggressive anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964 under the rule of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971). The years between 1965 and 1985 were considered the period of the 'normalization' of state policy towards religion, including the promotion of official religious figures over those deemed to be illegal and 'wandering' clergy. Finally, it was during the period of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) from the mid-1980s to 1991 that more freedom was given to believers, including Muslims, to revive their religious activity and practices and to re-open old mosques or build new mosques and *madrasa*s and express themselves more actively in the public sphere and even in politics.[35]

This thesis examines the implications of these major changes and the implementation of Soviet religious policy in the specific Muslim context in Gorno-Badakhshan. The appointment of a special bureaucratic representative in the Tajik SSR and its provinces followed the same procedure and rationale as in other parts of the former Soviet Union.

[35] For more on the chronology and periodization of the changes in Soviet religious policy under each of its leaders and their impact on the Muslim populations, see Phillip Walters, 'A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy', in S. P. Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 3-31; John Anderson, *Religion, State and Society in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge, 1994); and Yaakov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From World War II to Perestroika* (London, 2000).

According to CARC, operational statutes, the commissioners' primary tasks were to study and ensure the compliance of Soviet citizens, primarily believers, with state legislation.[36] These unique tasks and rules were though practiced differently and irregularly in this province of the Tajik SSR. An assessment of the religious situation by the CARC representative in this province from 1950 to 1960 paved the way for decreasing the number of religious figures and registering them as official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s according to the administrative divisions the *sel'sovet*s (village councils).[37] The registration of the official clergy reveals more about the state strategy of integrating the required number of religious figures in its policy and rendering the rest illegal and subject to administrative pressures. However, this process of formally appointing some officials and dealing with the rest of the unregistered religious figures was in turn marred by bureaucratic and propaganda problems. As the CARC documents reveal, the local officials delayed the process of appointing the official religious figures, failed to report on the religious situation in a timely manner or were unwilling to reveal instances of unlawful ritual performance.

In this context of divide and rule in the field of religious policy, relations varied between the CARC commissioner, the local officials, and the religious figures. The local officials would pressurise the religious figures when commanded to do so by the central government or party organs. Overall, however, they appeared cautious in dealing with the specific issues surrounding the performance of rituals and the activities of the religious figures. As my analysis of state archives reveals, the monitoring of religious activity was handled subtly and sensitively by the local officials who had to present an account of the religious situation that would satisfy the requirements of the party and state authorities from the centre and the republic. These accounts of the religious situation also seemed moderate and did not reveal the realities of the practice of Islam within the community. Therefore, the implementation of religious policy in this context had its own rationale and was determined by specific attitudes, practices and the existing connections between religious figures and officials. The dynamic of local relations and connections such as kinship and economic ties determined the outcome of the competition and cooperation

[36] See Dmitrii, Yuri Arapov, *Islam i Sovetskoe gosudarstvo (1944-1990). Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2011).

[37] A *khalifa* had served as an assistant to the Ismaili *pir*s (masters) in the past but emerged in the Soviet period as an official religious figure among the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan. *Domullo* refers to a learned person, a teacher of religion with respect and authority. The documents under study refer to the *domullo* in GBAO as the official figure responsible for conducting religious rites in the Sunni-populated districts.

between various actors in the religious field. In many parts of the Tajik SSR, state officials and most Communist Party members were not always bitter rivals or opposed to those in the strata of the population defined as *veruiushii* (believers) or the various Muslim religious figures referred to as *dukhovenstvo* (clergy). The clergy had a complex relationship with the party bureaucrats and local government officials due to existing networks of relationships, kinship and authority. There were cases when the clergy faced administrative pressures they had to appeal to some officials and party members for support. Like many of the Muslim clergy in other parts of Soviet Central Asia, the *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and *okhon*s (teachers) in the Tajik SSR also adapted their religious worldview to that of Soviet secular ideology. The CARC representatives recorded these views, which gave reason to doubt the 'double play' of these religious figures with Soviet policy.

Over the course of almost four decades from 1950 to 1985 and in the context of a legal but limited space for the practice of Islam, the religious figures did not remain marginalised social actors in the Tajik SSR. The archival documents of the office of the CARC commissioners and the information from oral interviews with religious figures provide evidence of the rise of the *khalifa*s, *domullo*s and *imom-khatib*s, as active social actors in their communities. Demographic and administrative changes meant that the official *imom-khatib*s, *khalifa* and *domullos* were now in charge of larger congregations with expanded informal religious markets and enlarged territorial boundaries from one to several towns and villages. The increasing population of the towns and villages and the improvement in living conditions led the communities to offer more material rewards to the religious figures in return for conducting rites. These earnings, received from the community, ameliorated the economy of the households headed by the *imom-khatib*s, *khalifa*s and *mullo*s.

In the years of moderate religious policy from the mid-1940s to the end of the 1950s the performance of religious rituals prompted disputes and rivalry among religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan. These disputes and differences were vividly expressed, especially during funerals. However, with the renewed anti-religious policy from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, and during the rest of the period, disputes over ritual performance came to a standstill.[38] An intensified atheist campaign coupled with bureaucratic regulation from the

[38] From the mid-1960s onwards, the reports by the CRA commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan do not provide detailed records of the disputes that may have existed between Ismaili religious figures in conducting these rituals during funerals.

mid-1960s to the end of Soviet period further targeted religious activity. The way this atheist propaganda influenced the population in different parts of the Soviet Union depended on how the lecturers themselves understood and conveyed it to the audience. The bureaucratic and formal record in the documents points to the rising numbers of atheist lectures, seminars, articles in the media, radio broadcasts, and research in higher academic institutes up to the late 1980s.[39] What did this intensified atheist campaign mean or achieve when the Soviet experts on religion, Communist Party propagandists and the authorities themselves realised that Islamic rituals prevailed on each of the important occasions of people's lives?[40] One of the failures of the atheist propaganda was considered to have been its low quality and the lack of knowledge of the atheist experts.[41] The spread of informal religious teaching in many parts of Tajikistan attests not only to the persistence of the transmission of Islamic knowledge among the population but also to the failure of atheist-oriented secular education in the upbringing of the new generation.

Gorno-Badakhshan as a Research Site

This thesis analyses state religious policy and Muslim practices in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Tajik SSR from 1950 to 1985. The years between 1950 and 1985 mark the beginning and almost the end of the systematic study, institutionalization and control of religious activities in this province. In 1950, the first CARC commissioner was appointed in this region, which embarked on a regular study of religious situation. The Soviet policies of the registration and bureaucratization of religious activity were pursued from the early 1960s but were neither revised nor did they make radical impact on the religious situation until almost the mid-1980s. What however, appears from 1985 onwards is that the extent of studying religious situation and ensuring the compliance of religious believer with the Soviet legislation was not stressed more, but seemed to have loosened.[42] The *perestroika* and *glasnost* atmosphere under the leadership of Mikhail

[39] *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan,* pp. 45-53.

[40] See T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i obshestvo.* (*Opyt istoriko-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia*) (Moscow, 1984).

[41] *The Subtlest Battle*, pp. 45-53.

[42] It should be noted that the reports on the religious situation by the CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan from 1985 to 1991 were not available in the regional archive in Khorog. In the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), few reports from the CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan are preserved for the years from 1985 to 1991. This absence of the regular reports in the CRA archives makes it difficult to provide a detailed analysis of the religious situation for the years from 1985 to 1991. In answer to my enquiry about these reports, the last Soviet CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan stated that he

Gorbachev from 1985 to 1991 seemed to have had some impact on increasing practice of some rituals. It was only in the beginning of 1990s that possibilities for contact emerged for religious communities in this province, in particular Ismailis, with their fellow believers in the world outside.

The selection of this province as a particular case for the study of the history of Islam in the Tajik SSR in this period is important and interesting for a number of reasons. First of all, as mentioned above, the number of studies on the interconnectedness of Islam and politics, and on the various aspects of the performance of religious rituals among Muslim communities in Central Asia, is growing. Despite this increase in academic research on Islam in Central Asia, the history of religious life in the Soviet period, including the Muslim communities in the Tajik SSR in the years from 1943 to 1991, remains largely an understudied topic. Secondly, in-depth analysis of the religious situation in the specific location has revealed many interesting and important keys to understand the divergent case of the history of Islam in the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the selection of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast as a specific region within the Tajik SSR is due to its geographic location and demographic composition. Although thinly populated, the province has been home to various ethnic and religious groups since its establishment as an autonomous oblast in the Soviet Union in 1925. Divided into seven districts, Gorno-Badakhshan houses Sunni and Shi'a Ismaili Muslim communities of different ethnicities. Unlike the other parts of Tajik SSR that are dominated by the mainstream Sunni population, Ismailis comprised 75% of the population of this province. The Ismaili population resided primarily in the central town of Khorog, the districts of Shugnan, Roshtqal'a, Rushan and Ishkashim. The Sunni Muslim population accounted for 25% of the population of the *oblast*.[43] They were settled in the districts of Qal'a-i Khumb (present Darwoz), Wanj and Murgab.[44] The religious situation in this province also differed from

---

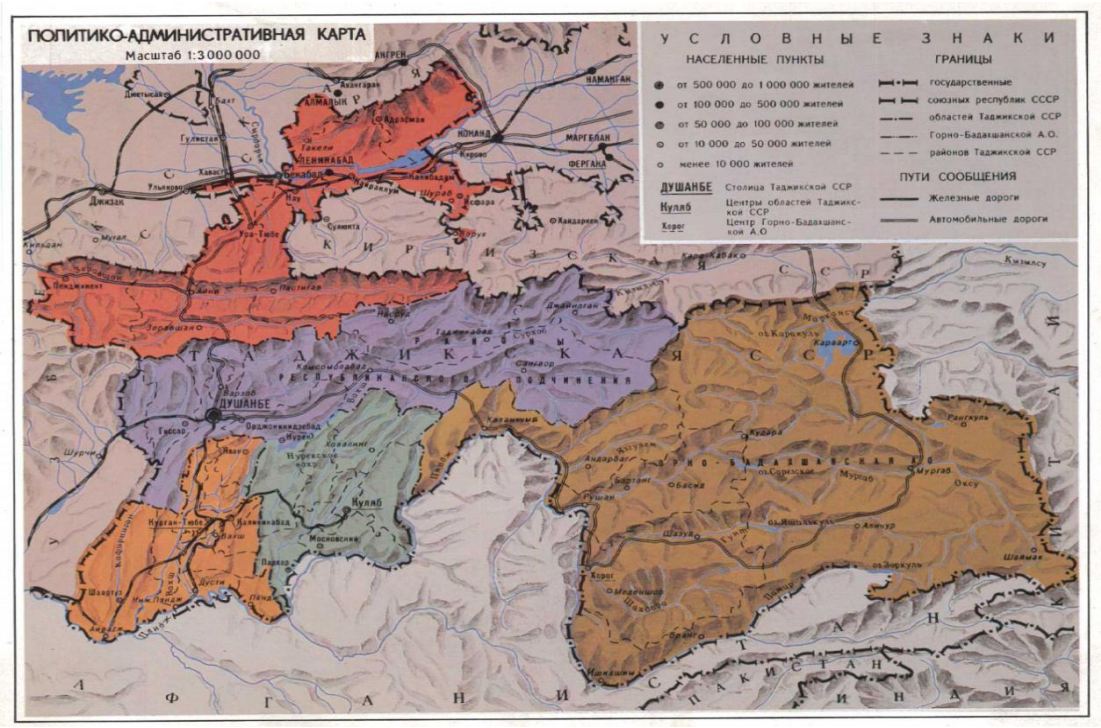
submitted the copies of his reports to the regional archival repository as his predecessors had done. (Interview with Parpishoev Akobirsho, the last Soviet CRA commissioner under the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan. (15 July 2011).

[43] These proportions of the Sunni and Ismaili population in the *oblast* were defined in the reports of the CARC later the CRA for the years 1943 to 1985. According to the Soviet estimates, the GBAO's population increased from 33,000 in 1910 to 148,500 in 1986. See sources quoted in Frank Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan)* (London, 2006), p. 46.

[44] The majority of the Ismaili population speak various Eastern Iranian languages known as Pamiri languages. The Sunni population of Darwoz and Wanj districts speak Tajik and the population of the district

the rest of the Tajik SSR due to the absence of registered mosques and prayer houses. In this province, religious life evolved mainly around the activities of the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s who were not subordinated to any religious office and hierarchy. For the above-mentioned reasons the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of the Tajik SSR offers particularly interesting site for researching religious life in the Soviet period.

Political and Administrative Map of the Tajik SSR [45]



of Murgab are predominantly Kyrgyz speaking. The inhabitants of Yazgulom valley in Wanj district are also Sunni Muslims but speak their own language, i.e., Yazgulomi, which belongs to the Pamiri language group. For more on the ethnic and demographic composition of the population of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (Province), see A. S. Davydov, *Etnicheskaia prinadlezhnost' korennogo naseleniia Gornogo Badakhshana (Pamira)* (Dushanbe, 2005).

[45] Source: Alexandr Gavriliuk and Viktor Yaroshenko, *Pamir* (Moscow, 1987).

Archives

The CARC collections in the regional archival repositories in Gorno-Badakhshan, in the state archives in Dushanbe, and archives in Russian Federation have provided the main data for this thesis. The documents of the CARC commissioners in the Tajik SSR in the repository of the Boygonii Markazii Dawlatii Jumhurii Tojikiston (BMDJT) (The Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan), contain reports for the years 1944 to 1966.[46] Reports by the republican *upolnomochennyi* from 1966 to 1991 are available in the CRA collection in the Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsiii (GARF) (The State Archive of the Russian Federation). The Communist Party reports from the Tajik SSR were obtained from the Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History), and from the Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI) (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History) in Moscow. It should be mentioned that the reports sent by commissioners to the council in Moscow were short and do not provide detailed information as do the internal documents preserved in the archives in Dushanbe, as well as in the regional archive located in Khorog, the centre of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. In his analysis of the CARC documents, Yaakov Ro'i has pointed to a pattern by which the various *upolnomochennye* often provided unverified information to the council in Moscow. In other words, these reporters on the ground were misleading the central CARC later CRA office. In its turn, the council was often upbraiding its commissioners in the republics and *oblast*s over deficiencies in their reports.[47] The documents preserved in the regional archive of Gorno-Badakhshan provide more in-depth information about the activities of the CARC commissioners in the region. There are also copies of draft and hand-written reports, letters from the clergy to the commissioners and detailed record of the conversation between them. In addition to this, the files for the office of CARC in this province also contain reports from the district *ispolkom*s about the activity of social assistance commissions to led anti-religious propaganda and policy.

[46] *Upolnomochennyi soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov Tadzhikskoi SSR*: The plenipotentiary representative for the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), later the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, see BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, 1944-1962 (27 June 1966).

[47] Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union,* see his 'Note on Methodology, pp. 1-8.

Depiction of the Religious Situation in the Archives

Since the documents prepared by the CARC (CRA) commissioners remain, the main source for the study, it is important to highlight the ways in which the religious situation was portrayed by the authors of these reports. The main analyses of the religious situation made by the CARC *upolnomochennye* were the detailed qualitative reports on the religious situation, especially the activity of religious figures and details of ritual performance. These were supplemented by statistical reports on the numbers of the registered and unregistered religious societies and religious figures; the numbers of the individuals attending mosques and visiting sacred places, as well as an estimate of donations made within the mosques of the Tajik SSR. These reports were submitted every three-months by the *upolnomochennye* from the *oblast*s to the office of the CARC in Moscow, to the *obkom*s (provincial party committees) and the *oblispolkom*s (provincial executive government committees). The CARC commissioners in the regions had also to report to the republican *upolnomochennyi.* Internal documents in the archives of the CARC office in Gorno-Badakhshan include the commissioners' plan of activities, the correspondence between them and the council, and the party state provincial authorities with regard to implementing religious policy. In each of their reports the commissioners had to spell out how they had carried out their work in accordance with the decrees and decisions of the Communist Party and Soviet government in the field of religious policy. The commissioners were obliged to send reports to the Committee of State Security (KGB) on instances of the violation of Soviet legislation by the clergy and other group of citizens.

The violations took various forms, including attempts by the clergy to discredit certain officials or conceal revenue. There were cases in which both the clergy and other citizens were brought to justice for the violations.[48] It appears from an analysis of the qualitative reports that the CARC commissioners usually stressed their activities, when facing the challenges to ensure the believers' compliance with the law. Accounts of the religious situation in the Tajik SSR therefore included details of the commissioners' visits to the towns, districts and villages, their meeting with the clergy, as well as local party and government officials. In the mid-1960s special assistance commissions were organised under the *ispolkom* of the *oblast*s and districts to ensure the compliance of believers with the Soviet legislation. For this reason the members of these assistance commissions were required to hold regular seminars and meetings with the elders in each village, with the

[48] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 2.

members of the kolkhozes (collective farms) with teachers, doctors and other strata of the population. Monitoring and reporting on the activities of these assistance commissions increased the burden of the bureaucratic activities that were to be done by the CARC *upolnomochennye.*

The celebration of Muslim religious festivals i.e., *Id-i Qurbon* and *Id-i Ramazon* increased the tasks of the surveying by the commissioners as these festivals served as a main means of increasing religiosity.[49] In the course of describing the celebration of these holidays in the registered mosques, the representatives also needed to report on rites that were performed by itinerant clergy. Religious practices performed outside registered mosques were therefore described by the commissioners as the main type of illegal activity in almost every report. In comparison with illegal gatherings for prayer, a widespread phenomenon such as underground religious teaching was less covered in their reports. Shrine pilgrimage and worship in their own right appeared as the main forms of illegal, 'anti-social' activity. It was for this reason that commissioners often indicated how itinerant clergy, *ishan*s (respected religious figures) and *mullo*s (individuals capable of conducting basic religious rites), organised group pilgrimages, and *domullo*s and *otuns* (female religious teachers) were involved in clandestine religious teaching in the Tajik SSR.

The commissioners also had to fill in special statistical forms for the council measuring religiosity among believers. As has been noted, religious life was measured by certain benchmarks starting from listing the clergy, people attending prayers and money collected and spent by the mosques. The commissioners collected statistics on the ages and educational level of the religious figures. Religiosity was not only defined simply by observing specific rites acknowledged as legal but also in terms of the influence of institutions which were regarded as unlawful but popular among the believers.[50] In these statistical reports, the representatives had to provide estimates of the number of people attending mosques for prayer, especially on Friday, in each month of the year and on the eve of *Id-i Qurbon* and *Id-i Ramazon*. When describing the process of celebration, the

[49] For more on detailed report on the activities of the registered and unregistered activities and the official evaluation of Muslim institutions, including rituals and festivals, see Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 100-535.

[50] Eren M. Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', unpublished PhD thesis, (Harvard University, 2010), p. 143.

upolnomochennye were mainly concerned with ascertaining whether these celebrations contributed to promulgating a surge in religiosity among the believers. A religious revival or rising religiosity among the Muslim population was therefore measured by the numbers of believers attending registered the mosque for prayer throughout the year, but particularly on the eve and during the days of religious festivals.

One of the usual ways of portraying the peaceful observation of religious rituals was to indicate that believers from other areas where official mosques were not functioning had travelled to participate in collective prayer in registered mosques. This statistical report about Muslim participation in prayers at the 17 registered mosques revealed little about the fact that a significant proportion of believers in the Tajik SSR remained outside official estimates. The CARC commissioners were aware of the fact that hundreds of unregistered mosques functioned across the republic. In their reports however, they purposefully drew a portrait of their success in applying the religious policy. By this they reassured the central authorities that the religious situation was under control.

The CARC commissioners in the Tajik SSR could also not ignore the fact that the lack of registered religious figures and mosques in many places triggered the activity of unregistered *ishan*s and *mullo*s. In their reports they pointed out instances when believers attempted to register a clergy or mosque. The commissioners however, did not consider the increasing number of people for assembling for prayer or the collection of money in the registered mosques as a sign of rising religiosity among the population. On the contrary, they praised the success of the anti-religious propaganda, as a result of which the population started to distrust the unregistered religious figures and turned away from illegal gatherings for prayer.[51]

In each of their annual reports the commissioners indicate how religiosity had declined, and that only the elders participated in prayer but not the youth or children. To measure religiosity in this way was common but problematic because, in many instances, the number of youths aged 18-30, and even children, participating in prayers during holidays appeared significant. [52] The problem also existed in the reports of the CARC commissioners in the Tajik SSR when a small increase, or decrease in practicing religion was generalised as the case for the whole republic. The CARC commissioners were also accountable for proving the success of anti-religious propaganda and explanatory work

[51] GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, ed. 733, (9 January 1975), p. 113.

[52] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p.79.

among population. In their report to the council they had to highlight the fact that all explanatory work on the eve of the celebrations of religious festivals was completed in advance. For this reason, the commissioners in the Tajik SSR had to instruct their colleagues in the provinces to work closely with local *ispolkom*s in ensuring the compliance of the believers with Soviet law on religion. The above mentioned approaches and problems in reporting on religious situation were not only pertinent to the CARC commissioners in the Tajik SSR. Instances of reporting by the CARC commissioners in other *oblast*s and republics of the USSR revealed similar problems of misrepresenting religious situation.[53]

Interviews

Considering the fact that the years from 1950 to 1985 are not in the distant past but a living memory for the generation aged forty and over in Tajikistan, I embarked on gathering oral information from a selected number of individuals. I selected the informants for my thesis not only according to the criterion of having considerable living experience in the Soviet period under study but mainly due to their direct involvement in religious activity, as well as the implementation of state religious policy. To this extent it was necessary to interview individuals with lengthy and relevant experience of serving as a) religious figures among the Muslim community; b) Soviet state and Communist Party officials who were responsible for carrying out religious policy and forging anti-religious propaganda.

The religious figures I interviewed include former and present *khalifa*s among the Ismailis and *imom-khatib*s and *domullo*s among the Sunni Muslims. As for former Soviet officials, I interviewed individuals who had worked as CAR commissioner, and as Communist Party secretaries. The other main group of respondents includes *domullo*s *okhon*s (teachers), and students of the informal schools of Islamic learning that ranged from the family schools to the wider informal learning circles, or *hujra* (cells), among the Muslims of the Tajik SSR. I also interviewed *maddohkhon*s (performers of devotional poetry), who have been practicing this tradition since the Soviet period. The final groups of informant for this thesis are researchers on the history of religious life. In the following box, I provide information about the numbers, educational background, age range and gender of the individuals whom I interviewed during the field research for my thesis in 2010 and 2011.

[53] Ibid., pp. 1-8.

Box. 1 Profession, Age Range and Gender of the Interviewees

Type of Interviewees	**No**	**Age range**	**Gender**
Ismaili *khalifa*s	8	50-90	Male
Sunni *imom-khatib*s, *domullo*s.	10	50-70	Male
Bibi-otuns	4	50-60	Female
*Maddohkhon*s	5	50-70	Male
Former Party Secretaries and Commissioner	5	70-80	Male
Researchers	5	40-60	Male
Total numbers of Interviewees	37	40-90	

In addition to the above-mentioned primary sources, I have utilised newspaper and journal articles, especially recent articles about religious life in the Soviet period, the biographies of religious figures among the Muslims in Tajikistan.[54] I need to stress two important points about the main sources for my thesis. Firstly the archives of the CARC and later the CRA commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan are analysed for the first time in this thesis. Secondly, in many instances I was able to clarify and cross-check the information provided in the CARC documents against the data supplied in interviews with informants living in this province. I applied the same method to the analysis of the CARC documents in the state archives in Dushanbe and the reports that were sent to the central office of the council in Moscow. However, the majority of my informants in other parts of Tajikistan were mainly former students and teachers in underground religious schools. As mentioned above religious education received little coverage in the reports of the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan and other parts of the Tajik SSR. To construct a historical narrative

[54] In his study Stephane Dudoignon provides rich data about the careers of the religious figures in the Tajik SSR based on his interviews with known *ishan*s and *domullo*s, their relatives, friends, disciples and opponents, as well as on their biographies and autobiographies. See, Stephane A. Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)', *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80. For some information on the biography of known personalities, including religious figures, see also recent research on local history such as Mamadali Bakhtiyorov, *Ta'rikhi Rushon* (Dushanbe, 2013); Alowatsho Qurbonshoev, *Wakhon osorkhonai ta'rikh* (Dushanbe, 2009) and H. Pirumshoev, *Ta'rikhi Darwoz* (Dushanbe, 2011).

from the account of one informant therefore required crosschecking against the narratives provided by two or three other interviewees, as well as against the information recorded in recently published sources.

Structure of the Thesis

The exploration of the religious history of the Muslim population of Tajikistan in the above-mentioned period in this thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides a brief background history of the major changes in Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the first three decades of the twentieth century, that led to the formation of Soviet Tajikistan and its Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. It discusses the influence of the major political and socio-economic changes on the religious situation in Gorno-Badakhshan prior to the 1940s.

Any analysis of the history of religious life in Soviet Tajikistan has to be located within the context of Soviet religious policy and its implementation in the USSR. This is done in the second chapter of this thesis, which looks at how the changing rules and decrees of Soviet religious policy were implemented and enacted in the specific context of interactions between officials and religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan.

Religious life in this remote region of the Tajik SSR revolved mainly around the activities of numerous religious figures in the period under study. The third chapter of this thesis explores the relationship and interactions between religious figures and officials, their religious activity and role within the community. Chapter three reveals that the various religious figures were not only the passive objects of the state's investigation and monitoring of their religious activity but they also became active agents in the evolution of religious life and social relations in their community.

Chapter four explores the way in which the Muslim population practiced and understood their religious rituals in the context of continuous monitoring and pressure by the various state and Communist Party bureaucratic structures. In this period, the performance of religious rituals was formally confined to the occasions of birth, marriage, death and informal celebrations of religious festivals. Despite this limitation, the practice of religious rituals provided a space for expressing and transmitting religious views and knowledge to the next generation. During the relatively tolerant years of state policy towards believers in the mid-1950s, the performances of religious rituals become a source of contention between various *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and even officials in Gorno-Badakhshan. In the years of the renewed anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964, the performance of religious

rituals was not only limited, but also exposed the clergy and other participants to the risk of being fined and imprisoned. Rituals were celebrated in extravagant ways and gathered larger crowd in the years of the normalized state attitude towards religious believers from 1970s till the end of Soviet rule in 1991. Extravagant spending on ritual performance on the occasion of life-cycle events and festivals indicated how the growing living standards increased families' spending on religious rituals. This contradicted the prevailing view that religious rituals would gradually disappear under the weight of modernization, continuous atheist propaganda and administrative control in Soviet society.

Chapter five explores the development of Islamic teaching in Soviet Tajikistan in this period, in both formal and informal milieus of learning. Formally, a limited number of Muslim students were enrolled in few official centres, where the curriculum was closely monitored by the state and supervised by the SADUM. This does not suggest that religious education ceased to flourish, but rather that it spread through an informal network of teachers and students from traditional family *maktab*s to the separate *hujra*s. In turn, increasing migration from rural to urban settings, from remote mountainous villages to the densely populated cities and towns contributed to the spread of religious teaching.

Chapter 1: The Creation of Badakhshan as a Soviet Autonomous Province

1.1 Socio-Political Changes in Badakhshan prior to the Establishment of the Soviet Government

This chapter provides a brief background to the major socio-political, economic and cultural transformations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries that led to the creation of Badakhshan as an autonomous province in the USSR. [1] It particularly focuses on examining how the major political changes in Central Asia affected the religious situation in this region.

These crucial changes in Badakhshan like in other parts of Central Asia began with the annexation of these territories into the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century. This annexation led to the establishment of direct Russian administration in some parts of Central Asia and the incorporation of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva as its protectorates until 1920. The parts of Central Asia which become subject to colonial administration from the 1860s were renamed as the Turkestan Governorate-General.[2]

The territories of the region of Badakhshan, located on the right bank of the River Oxus, was annexed by the Russian empire in 1895 according to the frontier agreement between Russia and the emirate of Bukhara on one side and Great Britain and Afghanistan on the other. Prior to this agreement, the population of this region was subject to ruthless persecution, looting and murder by the armies of the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901). Due to these atrocities, large segments of the population from the Western part of the Pamirs (Wakhan, Shugnan and Rushan) fled to the territories of the Eastern Pamirs and Fergana province which lay within Russian Turkestan.[3] After the frontier

[1] The geographical term Badakhshan covers a larder territory, including the present region of Badakhshan in Afghanistan and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province of Tajikistan. See for more on the history of Badakhshan and the Pamir, see Bahodur Iskandarov, *Istoriia Pamir* (Khorog, 1996).

[2] For more on the Turkestan Governorate-General, see the study by Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London, 2003), pp. 26-43; and for the annexation of the territories of Badakhshan (Pamir) by Tsarist Russia, see B. Iskandarov, *Vostochnaia Bukhara i Pamir vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Dushanbe, 1963).

[3] M. Nazarshoev, 'Dobrovol'noe vkhozhdenie Pamira v sostav rossii i ego progressivnoe znachenie', in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 36-66.

agreement, the emirate of Bukhara appointed a representative to the region. However, the population faced extreme poverty while also being exposed to harsh treatment by the Bukharan administrators.[4] In 1905, the Governorate-General of the Russian Empire in Turkestan decided to place Shugnan and other parts of Western Pamir in the 'temporary Russian administration' in order to free the population of this area from further exploitation, as well as to consolidate Russia's rule in the region.[5]

Following their victory in the 1917 revolution, the Bolshevik government organised the Turkestan Governorate-general or *krai* (province) into the Turkestan Autonomous Socialist Republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. As for the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara, they were turned respectively into the short-lived Khorezm People's Soviet Socialist Republic and Bukhara People's Soviet Socialist Republic. From the time of the national territorial division of Central Asia in 1924 to the late 1920s, the territories of these administrative structures were subsequently split up between the newly-formed Soviet Socialist Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It was in this period of territorial division and the creation of new political and administrative entities that young Central Asian Muslim Communists emerged as key players in the formation of the Soviet republics and the new political elites.[6]

In 1924 a Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was formed within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan. The present Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Obast was formed out of Pamir province on 2 January 1925. This autonomous *oblast* was then merged with the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR).[7] It has been noted that the distinct geographic and strategic location of the Pamir which borders Afghanistan

[4] H. Pirumshoev,'Pamir v pervoi polovine XIX-nachale XX vv in M. A. Bubnova, ed., *Istoriia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti* (Dushanbe, 2005), pp. 282-371.

[5] B. Iskandarov and Sh. Yusupov, 'Politiko-administrativnoe i sotsial'noe ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Pamira nakanune velikoi oktyabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revolutsii', in R. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 67-94; and also Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National identity and the Origins of the Republic* (London, 2007), pp. 31 -35.

[6] See Adeeb Khalid. 'Being Muslim in Soviet Central Asia, or an Alternative History of Muslim Modernity', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 2 (2007), pp. 123-143.

[7] The Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was turned into a union republic of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in 1929.

and China, as well as the diverse cultural, religious and linguistic compositions of its population proved vital for forming an autonomous *oblast* in this area.[8]

1.2 Religious Situation in Badakhshan Prior to the Establishment of the Soviet Government

Religious life in Shugnan, Rushan, Wakhan and other parts of Badakhshan, was led by the network of *pir*s (spiritual masters) and their *murid*s (followers) among the Ismaili population. The *pir*s were assisted by religious figures known as *khalifa*s. Both of these religious ranks served as interlocutors between the *murid*s and the Ismaili Imam who was the ultimate head of the Ismaili *tariqa*. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were dozens of Ismaili *pir*s in this mountainous region.[9]One of the distinguishing features of this network of *pir*s and *murid*s was that it was not bound by the administrative divisions of the area. For instance, a *pir* living in Shugnan could have followers in other regions, even outside Badakhshan, in Darwoz, Kulob, Osh (a city now in Kyrgyzstan) or China. The same was the case for the Ismaili *pir*s living in Sariqol (China) and Chitral (present-day Northern Areas of Pakistan), who had followers in the villages in Badakhshan. The position of *pir* was hereditary, passing from father to son, but the appointment of a new *pir* had to be confirmed by a letter bearing the stamp of the Ismaili Imam. In addition to this, the new *pir* had to have the agreement of the *murid*s of his predecessor in order to take over his duties. The various *pir*s were equal in status to each other since they were all appointed by the Ismaili Imam. Most *pir*s claimed to be from the families and descendants of *sayyid*s i.e., the group of the population who could trace their lineage to the Prophet

[8] See R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istoriii Sovetskogo Badakhshana,* (Dushanbe, 1985), in particular his notes on the introduction, p. 16.

[9] For more on *pirs*, see Aleksei Bobrinskoi, *Secta Ismailiia v Ruskhikh i Bukharskikh predelakh Srednei Azii* (Moscow, 1902); A number of recent studies have also highlighted the role of the Ismaili *pir*s and their response to the socio-political changes at the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in Badakhshan. See for instance, Elbon Hojibekov, *'*Ismailitskiie dukhovnye nastavniki (piry) i ikh rol' v obshchestvenno-politicheskoi i kul'turnoi zhizni Shugnana: vtoraia polovina XIX-30-ie gody XX vv*'*, unpublished candidate dissertation (Dushanbe, 2002); Abusaid Shohkhumorov, *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma* (Dushanbe-Moscow, 2008); Otambek Mastibekov, *Leadership and Authority in Central Asia: The Ismaili Community in Tajikistan* (forthcoming); and A. Iloliev, '*Pirship* in Badakhshan: The Role and Significance of the Institute of the Religious Masters (*Pir*s) in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Wakhan and Shughnan', *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, 2 (2013), pp. 155-175.

Muhammad and to the Imams in the Shi'i form of Islam. There were, however, exceptions as the Ismaili Imam could appoint a new *pir* who was not the son of a previous *pir* or from an *awlod* (clan) of *sayyid*s, but an educated *mullo* or *ishan.* According to Russian observers of the area, the *pir*s had a huge influence over the lives of their *murid*s, controlling most aspects of their spiritual, family and civil life.[10] That seemed to have been the case in the villages where *pir*s and *murid*s were living together. In the far distance this would be generalisation to indicate that the *pir*s influence prevailed over each aspect of the lives of their followers.

There were also cases when other figures, apart from *pir*s, temporarily dominated the religious landscape in these mountainous areas. The Russian scholar Zarubin provided an interesting story about the *shaykh*s who mobilised people around themselves, defying the *pir*s and other local religious and secular leaders.[11] These *shaykh*s were also regarded as the custodians of the *mazor*s (shrines), sometimes assisting or even acting as substitutes for the *khalifa*s in religious affairs. Loyalty and the connection between the Ismaili Imam and *pir*s with their followers were also maintained by the collection and delivery of *zakot* (dues). These donations were generally collected by the *khalifa*s then delivered to the *pir*s. The established or agreed amount of *zakot* was estimated at about 1/10 of the follower's household income. For instance, it was reported that the amount of *zakot* sent in 1923 by the Ismailis in Pamir to the Imam consisted of 30,000 roubles of pure gold, and 9,090 roubles of bronze. In 1930-31 the amount was approximately 3,850 roubles of gold and 1,250 roubles of bronze.[12]

Education in Badakhshan did not reach beyond the families of the various local rulers known as *mir*s and *khan*s rulers, the religious leaders i.e., *pir*s and *khalifa*s, and other wealthy strata of the population. A small stratum of the population received basic learning from their fathers or at school with separate teachers known as *mullo*s and *okhon*s. Some of these *okhon*s and *mullo*s came from outside the region. Those wishing to engage in further learning had to travel to other parts of Central Asia, or even India. It is stated that there were few *maktab*s (primary schools) in areas of the present-day Gorno-Badakhshan and

[10] Bobrinskoi, A. *Secta Ismailiia v Ruskhikh i Bukharskikh predelakh Srednei Azii* (Moscow, 1902), pp. 10-11.

[11] Ivan, Ivanovich Zarubin, *Materiali i zametki po etnografii gornykh tadzhikov. Dolina Bartanga* (Petrograd, 1917).

[12] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (8 August 1950), p. 12.

those that were there primarily attracted boys from the relatively comfortable families. Girls and children from poor families could not afford studying at these private *maktab*s. It was estimated that there were about ten literate and thirty semi-literate individuals living in the region by the end of nineteenth century.

A Russian visitor to the area at the beginning of the twentieth century indicated that literacy was not widespread and only a few *mullo*s were able to read. According to that visitor even *qozi* (judge) who occupied the second most important position in the country after the *khan* (ruler), could not read and write. Based on these observations and evidence the Soviet sources stated that over 90%, of the population of the region were illiterate.[13] Nevertheless, the situation of education is different when looking at the biographies of dozens of poets, writers and local scholars prior to the Soviet period. In his survey of the history of Tajik literature in Badakhshan, Abibov states that more than 60 poets were living in Badakhshan at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. As the biographies of these authors reveal, they were either taught by their fathers, by a hired *okhon*, or went to small *maktab*s that existed in their villages.[14] Lessons in the *maktab*s started from learning the *alifbe* (alphabet) and the *huruf* (letters) reciting sections of religious books and progressing gradually to interpreting their meaning. Teaching in these schools focused primarily on religious subjects.[15]

This kind of education prepared a new generation of religious leaders, *pir*s and *khalifa*s, writers as well as scribes *mirzo*s and *kotib*s (writers and scribers) *qozi*s (judges) *okhon*s and *mullo*s. Students who acquired basic reading and writing skills then continued to learn different fields of knowledge and skills such as *nujum* (astronomy), *tibb* (medicine) and *kotibi* (the scribal traditions). The scribal tradition was widespread among the people of Badakhshan, as a result of which hundreds of manuscripts on various subjects were copied. As mentioned above, the small portion of the educated population received their schooling in the family schools of the *mir*s (secular rulers) and *pir*s. One of the educated representatives of the Ismaili clergy at the end of the 19th century was *pir* Sayyid

[13] See R. Odilbekova, 'Kul'tura zapadnogo Pamira v kontse XIX-nachale XX vv', in M. S. Asimov, ed., *Pamirovedenie,* (2nd ed., Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 7-22.

[14] A. Habibov, Az *ta'rikhi adabiyoti tojik dar Badakhshon* (Dushanbe, 1971).

[15] See M. N. Nazarshoev, 'Pobeda velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii i ustanovlenie Sovetskoi vlasti na Pamire' in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985) pp. 95-114.

Farrukhsho, who after primary schooling within his family, studied for seven years in India. Upon his return to Badakhshan he succeeded his uncle as an Ismaili *pir*, gained prominence as a political leader and also wrote poetry under the pen-name Zaifi. One of his poems was entitled *Ta'rikhi Shohoni Shughnon* (History of the Kings of Shugnan) which briefly describes the eight *shah*s or rulers of Shugnan and was dedicated to the *mir* of Shugnan Sayyid Yusuf Alikhon.[16] His son Shohzodamuhammad (1868-1939) was an erudite scholar, praised by his local contemporaries and Russian visitors to the area.[17] After receiving a basic education in the family he continued to learn other subjects with various teachers. He learned astronomy with Abdul Ghiyoskhon ibn Yusuf Alikhon, after which he completed editing and scribing the book of *Nujum* by Ghiyosiddin Ali Isfahoni.[18] Shohzodamuhammad also become known as a *tabib* (doctor) and produced a treatise named *Tibbi Shohzodamuhammad*.[19] In 1909, the first Russian school was opened in Khorog, the present-day centre of Gorno-Badakhshan.

The religious situation in Badakhshan, especially among its Ismaili population, began to change with increasing visits by the local clergy to the court of the Ismaili Imam in India and the dispatch of missionaries from there to the region. In early 1920s missionaries from the court of Ismaili Imam attempted to affect a reform in the leadership structure, in ritual performance and in the collection of *zakot* (dues) among the Ismailis in Badakhshan. These changes however resulted in disputes and rivalry between the missionaries sent from India and the local religious leadership i.e., the *pir*s. It has been noted that the idea of reform was proposed by the visit of a local clergy Sayyid Haydarsho in 1921 to the residence of the Ismaili Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III (1877-1957.[20] A document titled

[16] For more on poet Farrukhshoh, see A. Habibov, *Az ta'rikhi adabiyoti tojik dar Badakhshon* (Dushanbe, 1971), pp. 105-111.

[17] See E. Hojibekov, *'Ismailitskiie dukhovnye nastavniki (piry) i ikh rol' v obshchestvenno-politicheskoi i kul'turnoi zhizni Shugnana. Vtoraia polovina XIX-30-ie gody XX vv'*, unpublished candidate dissertation (Dushanbe, 2002), p. 34.

[18] See Ghiyossidin Alii Isfahoni, *Nujum: (Bo tahrir wa ilowahoyi Shohzodamuhammad)* (introduction, glossary and Cyrillic edition by Umed Shohzodamuhammad (Khorog, 1995).

[19] See Umed Shohzodamuhammad, ed., *Tibbi Shohzodamuhammad* (Khorog, 1993).

[20] *The Birth of Tajikistan*, pp. 98-99.

'Charter of the Panjabhai Movement' was drafted by the missionaries in the residence of the Ismaili Imam.[21]

The charter proposed several points for changing the religious hierarchy and ritual performance among the Ismailis of Badakhshan. One of points of this charter dealt with reducing the role of the local *pir*s in solving religious issues and their control over Ismaili believers. The charter proposed that religious issues should be solved by the *anjoman*s (committees) within the *jamo'at-khona*s (prayer and community houses). Another important point of this charter was the replacement of the existing forms of prayer and funeral rites among the Ismailis of Badakhshan with new simplified prayer and rites. The other important point of the Panjabhai charter dealt with religious teaching and the establishment of schools for the Ismailis. According to this charter, religious books possessed by the Ismaili needed to be discussed by a *waiz* (preacher) in the *jamo'at-khona*. This suggestion itself was directed against the Ismaili *pir*s' monopoly of religious knowledge.

The missionaries appeared in the Pamirs at the same time as the Soviet government established itself there. Therefore, the Panjabhai missionaries came into contact with representatives of the Soviet government in Badakhshan. In 1922 the representative of the Panjabhai association made an agreement with the Chairman of the Soviet Political and Military Tripartite Commission; Shirinsho Shotemur (1898-1937), in the Pamir, to open a religious school. This agreement was viewed as a strategy by the Soviet leadership to eliminate illiteracy among the population of the western Pamir with the support of the Ismaili clergy. According to the agreement, the representative of the religious community was obliged to provide cloth, food, fuel and learning materials in Persian for the Soviet schools. These textbooks however, needed to be approved by the Political and Military Tripartite Commission. The representative of Ismaili community had also to provide salary

[21] Panjabhai: (literary denoting five brothers), originally emerged as a group advocating reform in the existing structure of the religious hierarchy, rituals and the payment of *zakot* among the Ismailis of India. For the activities of the Panjabhai councils and committees among the Ismailis of India, see Jonah Steinberg, *Globalisation and Identity in a Muslim Community*, pp. 49-51. For the Charter of the Panjabhais, see Document No. 54, 'Zakon (Ustav) Pandzhabaev', in A. B. Stanishevskii, ed., *Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov po istorii Pamira i Ismailizmu* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), p. 327-328; and unpublished article by T. G. Abaeva, 'Ismaility pripamiria i sektantskoe dvizheniia Pandzhabaev v Pamirskom Ismailizme (20-30-e gody XX veka)', in Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respublika Uzbekistana, f. 2464, op. 1, d. 3, (12 February 1997), pp. 1-13.

for the teacher of religious subjects. Any political influence on the students or interference in the activities of Soviet teachers was not allowed. Both sides agreed on these terms for ten years. This agreement was signed on 22 October 1922 by Shirinsho Shotemur representing the Soviet government and by Sayyid Munir Sayyid Qosim (1882-1957) a missionary representing the Ismaili community. The agreement was then sent for approval to Tashkent to the central office of Soviet government in Turkestan.[22] The Soviet leadership in the region also agreed not to confiscate land belonging to the Ismaili clergy on the condition that they could provide support for the state school.[23] To what extent this agreement was implemented remains unclear, but it was an attempt to reform the existing educational system that had been developed mainly within the *pir*s' families. It was also a pragmatic approach by the representative of the Soviet government in the Pamir to use existing resources to establish new Soviet schools in the province.

The most striking point in this charter was about the collecting, accurate counting and voluntary payment of *zakot*. All this would have to be carried out by members of the *anjomans* (committees).This method of collecting and counting *zakot* resulted in an increase in the amount of *zakot* to be delivered to the court of the Imam.The proposed reform was not successful as some of the *pir*s insisted on their right to collect *zakot* and lead their Ismaili followers. Some of the *pir*s turned against the Panjabhais' proposal to reform the rituals of the Ismailis of Badakhshan and accused the missionaries of spreading the practices of Khodja Ismaili from India. Their dispute reached a climax that aroused the worst fears of the advisers at the court of the Aga Khan that the Ismailis of Badakhshan might distance themselves from his sphere of influence. After this dispute, the Aga Khan issued a number of *farmon*s (instructions) dissolving the proposed *anjoman*s and allowing the *pir*s to continue collecting *zakot.*

In 1927 the Aga Khan issued a *farmon* banning the Panjebhais activities in Badakhshan. The Imam also ordered the Ismailis of Badakhshan to continue practicing their religious rituals in the old manner.[24] Despite this ban, the Panjabhai reformers attracted groups of followers in a few villages in the Shugnan and the Rushan districts. These followers started

[22] See references to the agreement in Qurboniddin Alamshoev, *Shirinsho Shotemor v istorii vozrozhdeniia Tadzhikskoi gosudarstvennosti* (Dushanbe, 2013), pp. 174-175.

[23] See Statement from the decision of Political and Military Tripartite. From documents, quoted in A. Shohkhumorov, *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma* (Moscow-Dushanbe, 2008), pp. 88 - 89.

[24] Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan,* p. 99.

to perform the shorter ritual of *tasbeh* (a form of prayer uttered when counting rosary) instead of chanting the text of the *charogh-noma* (Book of Light) as part of the ritual of the *charogh-i rawshan* (the luminous lamp) on the final day of a funeral ceremony.

Meanwhile the influence of the *pir*s and *ishan*s among the Muslims community began to decrease with the election of new representatives to the Soviet government in each of the village in Pamir. A campaign to limit the power of landlords and other wealthy individuals including the Ismaili *pir*s had started in the region.[25] In 1922 Ismaili clergy in Shugnan were accused of espionage, of links with the Aga Khan, and of having a plan to mobilise the masses against the Soviet government. On the basis of these accusations' Ismaili *pir*s and their companion in Shugnan were arrested by the National Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) on 16 July 1922. Charges were directed principally against *pir* Sayyid Yusuf Alishoh, who allegedly planned to rise up against the Soviet government with the support of a certain Temurshohkhon (an *ishan* from the Qataghan region of Afghanistan). However, that year the local Soviet leadership of the Pamir threw its support behind an effort to save some of the Ismaili clergy from being purged.[26]

In 1931 a certain Mirzo Qoim Ismoilzoda named as the representative of Panjabhai representative, wrote a letter to the *ispolkom* (executive committee) of the Autonomous Oblast of Badakhshan asking for a permit to open religious classes. In this letter Mirzo Qoim stated that he had been appointed as the representative of 150 households from which he collected *zakot* and *delivered* it to the court of the Aga Khan in Bombay. In return, the Aga Khan had instructed him to summon people and establish school for teaching religion for Ismaili children. The Panjabhai representative would provide a salary for the teachers and school if the Soviet government allowed them to teach religion. It is not mentioned in the documents what kind of immediate reply the Soviet government in Gorno-Badakhshan gave to this appeal by Mirzo Qoim.[27]

---

[25] S. A. Radzhabov and M. Shergaziev, 'Sozdanie i razvitie Sovetskoi gosudarstvennosti v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtanomnoi Oblasti', in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 115-136.

[26] For more on this instance of the Ismaili *ishan*s being accused in anti-Soviet revolt see documents in L. N. Khariukov, *Anglo-Russkoe sopernichestvo v tsentral'noi Azii i Ismailizm* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 173-178.

[27] See 'Zaiavlenie Oblastnomu Ispolkomu Avtonomnoi Gorno-Badakhshanskoi oblasti ot predstavitelia Aga Khana grazhdanina Mirzo Kaima Mirzo Ismail-Zade, zhitelia Suchan Shugnanskoi volosti', (16 June 1931), Document No. 68 in A. B. Stanishevskii, ed., *Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov po istorii Pamira i Ismailizmu* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), p. 354.

By 1930s the Soviet government had established itself firmly in the province and started to eliminate the religious clergy and their resources. The idea of opening religious schools by the Panjabbhai Ismaili missionaries therefore did not succeed in the Soviet territory of Badakhshan.

In the 1930s the Soviet government levelled new accusations and renewed the old ones against the clergy in this province. *Pir*s and *khalifa*s and other individuals involved in religious activity were accused of delivering *zakot* to the Ismaili Imam, as well as of being spies for the foreign governments. *Pir* Sayyid Yusuf Alisho was arrested and was reportedly poisoned on his way to exile.[28] As a result of this policy of repression significant numbers of religious figures, known individuals, and authorities, were imprisoned and some fled Soviet territory of Badakhshan in 1930s.

The Sunni Muslim clergy in the region also faced the same situation in the region in the 1930s. Significant numbers of *mullo*s and *ishan*s were persecuted, imprisoned or fled to Afghanistan from Sunni populated villages in the Wanj and the present Darwoz districts of Tajik SSR from the 1920s to the end of the 1930s. The Kyrgyz-speaking clergy in Murgab fled over the border into China and Afghanistan. Archival documents reveal that the delivery of *zakot* to the Aga Khan was one of the grounds for imprisoning and eliminating may individuals.[29] There is no evidence of the payment of *zakot* to the court of the Imam in the archival documents from the 1940s to the end of Soviet rule. It is known, however, that some Ismaili believers kept aside their *zakot* and then delivered it to the office of the Ismaili *tariqa* in post-Soviet period.[30]

With the consolidation of Soviet government in the Pamir the religious reform or modernisation to change rituals, establish new school by the Ismaili missionaries came to an end. The Soviet repressive policy towards religion in the 1930s had completely altered religious landscape that was to be turned into field of rivalry between the existing leaders the *pir*s and the missionaries advocating reform. In the years of repression in the 1930s a huge number of books deemed to be religious literature were destroyed. Many individuals and families hid their book collections in iron boxes in remote mountains, or buried in

[28] For more on this case of accusations, see Shohkhumorov, *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma*, pp. 91-92.

[29] There are dozens of personal files *Kontrolnoe delo* (supervised files) preserved in regional archive of GBAO which provide information about those individuals repressed in 1930s.

[30] See *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma,* p. 99.

wells. When some of these individuals were killed, jailed or fled to neighbouring countries, their families had no idea where the religious literature was hidden. In the late 1950s, when the religious milieu became freer, some families managed to retrieve their books, but some troves later found by locals led to disputes over their ownership.[31]What was more profound was that the Soviet anti-religious campaign antagonized the population against the established religious figures. Information from the archives and other sources which will be analysed in the subsequent chapters confirms this division and the struggle between the clergy and the new model Soviet citizen.

[31] In the early 1990s a collection of hidden books and documents was found in a village of the Gorno-Badakhshan and later returned to the members of the family to whom it originally belonged. See, information provided in T. S. Kalandarov, 'Religiia v zhizne pamirtsev XX veka' in N. Emel'ianova, ed., *Pamirskaia ekspeditsiia* (Moscow, 2006), p. 47.

Chapter 2: Changing Soviet Religious Policy and Its Implementation among Muslim Communities (1950-1985)

Introduction

During the Second World War, relations between the Soviet state and its religious communities improved. On the part of the Soviet state, there were concessions to believers that allowed them to reopen churches, monasteries, seminaries, mosques and religious centres. The institutions that were allowed to function for the Muslim population as a result of this concession included the four spiritual directorates, a *madrasa* (religious school) in Bukhara (Uzbekistan) and a number of the mosques closed since the 1930s.[1]

In turn believers, including Muslims, had to express their loyalty to the Soviet state by collecting donations to support the Soviet army in its fight against Nazi Germany. Soviet Muslim leaders also demonstrated their loyalty to the state and support for the Red Army through appeals at home and abroad to their fellow-believers. Apart from this much-needed collaboration, during the war, it was felt that mass persecution of the various groups of population including the believers, would cause anti-Soviet sentiment. For instance, the concession to all believers was mainly made due to the 1939 annexation of the Polish territory which had an overwhelming Christian population.[2] To start a new policy of persecution would have involved the Soviet state into a new wave of unrest. It has been indicated that the hardship of war exposed the masses to the influence of religious

[1] The four spiritual administration included the already established Central Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Inner Russia and Siberia (in Russian, TsDum), whose activity ceased in 1936 but resumed in 1942. In 1943 a new centre, the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) was allowed to be formed. In 1944, the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Transcaucasia (DUMZ) and later the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Northern Caucasus (DUMSK) were established. For more on the tasks, activities and territories assigned to these directorates see, Yaakov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From World War II to Perestroika,* (London, 2000), pp. 100-180. More detailed information on state support for the spiritual directorates appears in letters from the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults to the Council of the People's Commissariat of the USSR. The CARC requested the Soviet government to put places of worship and a number of mausoleums in Central Asia under the control of SADUM, as well as to allow a certain number of Muslims to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. See the collection of CARC reports edited by Dmitry Yu. Arapov, *Islam i Sovetskoe gosudarstvo (1944-1990).Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2011).

[2] See Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 104; and John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, p. 8.

groups in the Soviet state.[3] These changes in Soviet state policy towards religion paved the way for new policy of institutionalizing of religious activity.

In the larger part of the Muslim-populated republics of the Soviet Union, this institutionalisation was mainly carried out with the collaboration of the CARC and later the CRA, with the spiritual directorates, the registered mosques and the clergy under their jurisdiction.[4] In the regions, where these directorates and registered mosques did not function, the CARC commissioners and the local administration, i.e., the *ispolkom*s had to work directly with the individual clergy to implement religious policy.[5] The Muslim populations in the Tajik SSR were connected to SADUM through the office of the *qoziyot* [6] and the registered mosques. In this republic, the areas that remained out of SADUM's reach were the Ismaili-populated Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast and other districts where registered mosques did not function. Nevertheless, it should be noted the local government did not lose their control of the religious situation in the territories where SADUM representatives, the *qoziyot* and registered mosques were not functioning.

This chapter analyses the implementation of Soviet religious policy in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajik SSR in the years from 1950 to 1985. As in other provinces of the former Soviet Union, the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan had to deal both with instructions from the top and work in close collaborating with other bureaucratic party state offices under the *obkom* and *oblispolkom.*[7]

---

[3] Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, p. 8.

[4] Eren M. Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Harvard University), pp. 174-173.

[5] See *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 215-217.

[6] *Qoziyot* - an office of the representative of SADUM headed by a *qozi* in each of the republics of Central Asia which was established in 1957 in Tajik SSR.

[7] The provincial partiinoe *biuro* (Communist Party Bureau) was established in 1925 with the formation of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast itself. In 1930, it became the *oblastnoi komitet partii* (*obkom*) the provincial party committee of the Communist Party in the GBAO, the highest party state office in charge of the province. The provincial executive government committee *oblastnoi ispolnitel'nyi komitet*, (*oblispolkom*) as the governing power and administration was elected in 1925. For more on the establishment and development of Soviet government and Communist Party units in GBAO, see articles by S. A. Radzhabov and M. Shergaziev, 'Sozdanie i razvitie Sovetskoi gosudarstvennosti v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti' pp. 115-134; and A. I. Vishnevskii and M. N. Nazarshoev, 'Istoriia obrazovaniia i ideino-organizatsionnogo ukrepleniia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi oblastnoi partiinoi organizatsii', in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 137-182.

The CARC commissioner under the *oblispolkom* of the province therefore had to work with the *raikom*s (district party committees), and *raiispolkom*s (the district executive government committees) and the chairmen of *sel'sovet*s (the village councils), as well as the management of the *kolkhoze*s (collective farms). The analysis of the activity of the CARC commissioners and the local officials and institutions in implementing religious policy in this particular province, however, needs to be situated within the larger context of the changing religious policy and institutionalisation of religious life in the Soviet Union in this period.

Analysing CARC documents, this chapter argues that the implementation of Soviet religious policy in this province did not strictly follow the rules, decrees and decisions of the central state authorities. In the context of Gorno-Badakhshan, populated by Sunni and Ismaili Muslims of different ethnicities, assessment of the religious situation and ensuring compliance with Soviet legislation on religion took a distinct form. Despite often remaining reluctant to deal with decisions and decrees from the centre, the local party and state officials in this province managed to present reports on the religious situation which confirmed that the population was complying with the Soviet legislation on religion.

The chapter proceeds with a brief analysis of how the Ismaili Muslim clergy in Gorno-Badakhshan responded to the Soviet state's concession to believers during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). It will then discuss the main rules and decrees of the Soviet state indicating shifts in the field of religious policy. This will be followed by an analysis of the activities of the CARC commissioners in studying and ensuring the compliance of the believers with Soviet state legislation from the 1950s to the mid-1980s in this province. The next section will examine the activities of the local government officials in implementing the decrees and decisions in the field of religious policy, through the bureaucratic commissions. The final section looks into the way by which atheist propaganda was conducted by the local party and state bureaucratic officials and structures in this province.

2.1. Expressions of Loyalty to the Soviet State

As mentioned above, the Muslims of Central Asia, like most of the religious believers in the former Soviet Union, provided overwhelming support to the Soviet Army during the war against Germany. This support and loyalty ranged from propaganda speeches by the SADUM-appointed clergy, to calls for mass support for the Soviet Army, condemnation of the atrocities of German troops, prayers for a Soviet victory, and the collection of

donations in cash and kind from the Muslim population.[8] The Ismaili population in Gorno-Badakhshan did not remain aside from this campaign for supporting Soviet Army, even if they were not connected to SADUM which was managing the religious affairs among the Sunni Muslim population in Central Asia.

The Ismaili clergy and believers in Soviet Central Asia also echoed the support given by their fellow Muslim citizens for the Red Army during the war. Examples of these kinds of supports include preaching for the victory of the Red Army and the collection of contributions by the leading Ismaili *ishan*s such as Sayyidkozum Sayyidfarukhshoev (about 75,350 rubles) and Shonom Sayyidmursalov (about 31,134 rubles) for the fund to defend the Soviet Union.[9] Together with other religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan, these *ishan*s also signed an appeal on behalf of the Ismailis in this province to their fellow-believers around the world.[10] In 1944, the People's Commissariate for State Security recommended to the Central Committee of the Communist Party to instruct SADUM to distribute 2,000 examples of this appeal through the network of Ismaili clergy in the Tajik SSR and neighboring countries where Ismailis resided.[11]

To sum up, the appeal on behalf of the Ismailis of Soviet Union to their co-religionists in the world stressed the case that Muslims of the Soviet Union supported their homeland. It also highlighted the point that the true quality of a Muslim believer is to display love for his or her homeland. Furthermore, it indicated that the aim of the German army was to

[8] This general information about Central Asian Muslim population's support for the Red Army is indicated in the appeal that was made of behalf of SADUM to Muslims of all over the world. See the copy of SADUM appeal in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 261, (21 January 1944), pp. 1-7.

[9]Sayyid Kozum Sayyid Farrukhshozoda (Sayyidfarrukhshoev) was the son of an Ismaili *pir* from Shugnan. Having survived the years of repression in the 1930s, Sayyid Kozum emerged as one of mobilising figures among the Ismailis in this province during the years of the Second World War. For a more detailed account on his religious activity and gathering contributions for Red Army, see Elbon Hojibekov, *Ocherkho oidi ta'rikhi Badakhshon* (Dushanbe, 2013), pp. 59-76; Shonom Sayyid Mursalzoda (Sayyidmursalov) was the son of another *pir* from the district of Shugnan. See *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma*, pp. 99-100.

[10] *Razdelenie Badakhshana*, p. 100.

[11] See, the instruction from the head of Narodnii Komissar Gosudarstvenosti Bezopasnosti SSSR (The People's Commissariat for State Security of the USSR), V. N. Merkulov to the Central Committee Secretary Aleksandr Shcherbakov in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 261, (4 March 1944), p. 19; and also notes about it in Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 113.

destroy the lives of the Soviet people and to insult Muslims in the Soviet Union by turning them into slaves. The atrocities perpetrated by the Germans in the Ukraine and North Caucasus, including the killing of the Muslim population, were highlighted to demonstrate this threat.[12]Similar themes with identical wording were included in an appeal on behalf of the Sunni Muslim clergy in SADUM to the Muslims of the world.[13] The involvement of the State Security Committee in the distribution of these appeals raises questions about their authorship. Indeed, the similarity of the political propaganda, polemic and semi-academic discourse, and the actual wording of the paragraphs in these two appeals, suggests that they were actually drafted by the state propaganda and security experts.

It was matters related to the war, and Soviet state's concessions to believers that prompted similar appeals and expressions of patriotism by the Sunni and Ismaili clergy in Central Asia. Prior to these appeals the religious figures in the Tajik SSR, including the Ismailis, were regarded as anti-Soviet and disloyal, reactionary groups waiting for an opportunity to interfere in state policy. A report submitted to Moscow by the propaganda unit of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan stated that:

> With the outbreak of war in 1941, the Ismaili *dukhovenstvo* (clergy) in certain parts of Gorno-Badakhshan revived their activities through secret religious gatherings in which they led anti-Soviet agitation. In this respect the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan paid special attention to strengthening political work among the masses in the districts of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. Lecturers and agitators of the Communist Party in Tajikistan, the provincial party committee in Gorno-Badakhshan and the district party committees all led anti-religious propaganda among the population in the Pamir. As a result of this strengthened agitation and propaganda, a number of 'Living Gods', who were preaching among the Ismailis in this province, had disappeared by 1943.[14] However, there are still serious deficiencies in the mass agitation and propaganda work among the population [15]

This revival of religious activity by the Ismaili *pir*s in Gorno-Badakhshan was also pointed out in a pamphlet published by the Propaganda Unit of the Central Committee of the

[12] See, for more, the copy of this appeal in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 261, (4 March 1944), p. 19.

[13] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 261, (21 January 1944), pp. 1-7.

[14] The phrase 'Living God' was used in number of Soviet polemical and propaganda writings to refer to the Ismaili Imams. For instance in the beginning of his polemical article about Aga Khan III, Sultan Muhammad Shah, the 48th Ismaili Imam, the Soviet Orientalist scholar Bobojon Ghafurov stated that 'Among the Muslims there is an Ismaili sect that consider the Aga Khan as Living God' see Bobojon Ghafurov, 'Aga Khan', *Bezbozhnik*, 11-12 (1940), pp .8-10; and also *Ob Ismailizm* (Stalinabad, 1943) analysed below.

[15] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 227, (16 December 1943), pp. 33-34.

Communist Party of the Tajik SSR.[16] This pamphlet called for a strengthening of the policy of atheism among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan, a strategy that was in line with the shift from a physical struggle to an ideological one against clergy and other believers in the Soviet state. Interestingly, it compared religious policy in the Soviet Union with those in the USA and Germany by noting that the Nazi state had first co-opted various religious sects and then destroyed each of them. While acknowledging the support of religious communities for the Red Army, it also warned Communist Party members and local authorities of the existence of some 'reactionary elements' among religious figures in the Soviet territory. The pamphlet provided a detailed polemical account of the history and beliefs of the Ismailis and warned state officials to be alert to possible provocation by German agents operating in Soviet territory. Some of these agents were assumed to be the local Ismaili clerics who were guided and supported by Aga Khan in Gorno-Badakhshan.

The pamphlet went on to list a number of instances when Ismaili leaders had supposedly undermined the establishment of the Soviet government in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. These instances included a conspiracy by Ismaili *pir*s against the Soviet government in 1922. They were also involved in collecting various forms of *zakot* that were delivered to the residence of Aga Khan III, until 1936. Another accusation was that emigrant Ismaili clerics were assembling in Afghanistan and attempting to foment a revolt against the Soviet state. They were also accused of preaching against cultural, developmental and educational reforms in the territory of the Soviet Union. The Ismaili religious leaders were also blamed for being duplicitous i.e., they were speaking in public about loyalty to the Soviet government, but in private preaching against it.

The pamphlet also lists the names of several individuals who emerged as preacher among the Ismaili population of Pamir in the early 1940s. These individuals pretended to be deputies of the Living God in order to exploit the member so of the *kolkhoz*es in the Soviet Pamir. These clerics were allegedly agitating against the Soviet government at religious gatherings, especially during funerals. The Soviet government succeeded in closing the border with Afghanistan, improving the quality of life by constructing good roads, establishing collective farms and opening schools in this province. All of these developments should have destroyed the social roots of religion, but significant numbers of people were said to have blindly followed the 'reactionary Ismaili clergy'. The pamphlet

[16] *Ob Ismailizm* published by the Otdel Propagandi i Agitatsii TsK KP (b) Tadzhikistana. Dlia sluzhebnogo pol'zovaniia. Gosizdat Tadzhikistan (Stalinabad, 1943).

stated that the Stalinist Constitution guaranteed freedom for all Soviet citizens to practice religion and also for those who did not follow it. Nevertheless, it called on Communist Party members to 'give the ultimate rebuff to the Ismaili clergy who had attempted to undermine the defensive capacity of the Soviet lands by using the believers for their hostile aims against the state.' With this warning, the pamphlet called for an intensified propaganda campaign against the remaining Ismaili clergy who sought to sabotage state policy and who were allies of the German agents and spies in the Soviet territory.[17]

The examples provided in the pamphlet concerning ties between the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan, and their leadership, and fellow believers in Afghanistan, British India and China, their disagreements with Soviet policy, and their preaching activities, all seemed to have established a sufficient basis for the Soviet ideological and security apparatus to launch new accusations against them. Nor can it be ignored that anonymous informants used the accusations against the Ismaili clergy as a way of advancing their careers. In the Soviet state, many atheist and anti-religious propagandists and researchers sought to bolster their career prospects with alarmist reports.[18]

A similar call to strengthen state policy and revise anti-religious propaganda was issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Tajik SSR to the local officials in the border districts. For instance, the central party committee in this republic revealed that in the early 1940s religious figures in the border districts of Farkhor, Danghara, Shuroobod, Dashtijum and Khowaling, had increased their anti-Soviet activities. The bulk of these clergy then fled to Afghanistan.[19] What was interesting, and at the same time confusing, was the use of the label of 'agent' applied both to individuals working for the Soviet state, especially the security service and to individuals labelled as anti-Soviet and disloyal, i.e., agents of foreign imperialist powers. In his study on Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia and the Ismailis, Leonid Khariukov referred to the possibility that Soviet state considered deporting the population of Gorno-Badakhshan during the Second World War.[20] In his general study on Islam, Klimovich remarks about the Ismailis of the Pamir:

---

[17] See *Ob Ismailizm*, p. 46.

[18] See Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (London, 2007), pp. 104-105.

[19] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 228, (16 December 1943), p. 17.

[20] According to Khariukov's information the Soviet state sent a special commission to Gorno-Badakhshan during the war in order to consider the deportation of the population of this province to the other parts of the

The steady implementation of the principle of freedom of conscience in our country, for the Ismailis as for the members other religious cults, obviates the need for them to hide their religious affiliation. In the absence of religion being a dominant factor in the state the very concept of sectarianism in our environment is a relic and an anachronism. Indeed Ismailis have ceased being secretive. This change in their behaviour is characterised in their motivation, which I observed in the Pamir in the summer of 1944. I have heard them saying: 'The Soviet Constitution allows us freely to practice religion and not to hide our faith.'[21]

With the war-time concessions, the Ismaili clergy seem to have realized the necessity of seizing the opportunity to express their loyalty and material support for the Soviet government. By rallying support for the Soviet army, the Ismaili clergy, particular those related to the families of persecuted *pir*s, presumably hoped that the state would remove the pejorative label of 'agent' and the threatening accusations against them made in the 1930s and early 1940s. In its turn, the Soviet government in the province acknowledged the service rendered by the religious figures, allowing them to conduct religious rituals freely among the population. Most of the Ismaili *khalifa*s had reportedly either stopped their activities or were performing rituals such as funerals clandestinely due to the fear of repression that existed in the 1930s.[22]

2.2. Changes in Soviet Religious Policy

The concessions to believers in the years of the Second World War only lasted for a short time as there was no change to the 1929 Soviet law on religious societies. By the end of the 1940s the Soviet government returned to strictly controlling revived religious activity by closing down religious societies and renewing anti-religious propaganda.[23] Contradictory resolutions on religious policy appeared in 1954 concerning the increase in religious activity and the growing Muslim population.[24] The initial years of Nikita Khrushchev's rule from 1955 to 1957 were considered the easiest for religious believers to revive the

---

Soviet Union. However, one of the members of this commission, the Soviet scholar on Islam, Liutsian Klimovich opposed the decision to deport the population of this area. Later on, Klimovich told Khariukov that it was alleged that there was an attempt in Khorog to poison him because of this view. See L. N. Khariukov, *Anglo Russkoe sopernichestvo v tsentral'noi Azii i Ismailizm* (Moscow, 1995), p.156.

[21] See L. I. Klimovich, *Islam* (Moscow, 1965), in particular the section on the Ismailis, pp. 137-156.

[22] See, T. S. Qalandarov, 'Religiia v zhizni Pamirtsev XX veka' in N. M. Emel'ianova, ed., *Pamirskaia ekspeditsiia* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 24-50; and E. Hojibekov, *Ocherkho oidi ta'rikhi Badakhshon,* pp. 69-75.

[23] Philipp Walters, 'A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy', in S. P. Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 3-30.

[24] See Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States,* p. 6.

practice of their religion.[25] Between 1958 and 1964, several decrees and resolutions were issued with the aim of renewing the anti-religious campaign, preventing visitations to shrines, enhancing atheist propaganda and putting an end to the 'anti-social activities of religious figures'. The 1961 decree 'On the Strict Observance of the Laws on Religious Cults' reinforced the 1929 law on religious societies, limiting the activities of believers outside religious buildings and obliging religious societies to change their internal procedures. As a result of this campaign, large numbers of mosques lost their registration. One of the reasons for the closure of large numbers of mosques in the Tajik SSR and the Uzbek SSR was the fact that the local authorities appeared to be more active in implementing Khrushchev's anti-religious policy.[26] The CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR viewed the closure of mosques as the outcome of good propaganda among the believers who then went on to use the buildings for other practical purposes.[27] It remains unclear what SADUM did to prevent this happening in the Tajik SSR.

In 1975, in the era of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) the existing law on religion was revised and all legal regulatory powers were placed in the hands of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA). This rule made it more difficult for a religious society to be registered, a situation that lasted until 1990. In that year a new law on religious organisations was passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In contrast to all previous rules and decrees, this new legislation provided full legal status for religious societies to function, own their places of worship and property, permitted religious teaching and removed all obstacles to charity and publishing, and banned the tax imposed on the clergy.[28] The law also allowed religious societies to expand their relations with other registered organizations and with communities abroad. What made this law different from previous ones was its practical implication. The previous law granted equal rights to believers and atheists, but in practice the former were deprived of their rights, while the latter were protected. This law, ratified in 1991, also permitted the teaching of religion in

[25] Ibid., p. 19.

[26] John Anderson, 'Islam in the Soviet Archives: A Research Note', *Central Asian Survey*, 3 (1994), pp. 384-394.

[27] See *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 212.

[28] Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, p. 170.

public schools after regular hours and put an end to decades of anti-religious propaganda in the Soviet Union. [29]

The general rules and regulations of the Soviet state towards religion were passed through the centralised Communist Party and government hierarchy from union level to the republics and *oblast*s. On the ground, the local organs of government and party units implemented the numerous decisions, decrees and instructions on religion. It was the action of various local officials which defined the success and limits of the central state policy to ensure the compliance of believers with Soviet legislation.

2.3. Implementation of Soviet Religious Policy in Gorno-Badakhshan

In 1944 by decision of the Council of the People's Commissars (SNK) of the Soviet Union the office of the CARC commissioner to study and regulate the religious situation was established in the Tajik SSR.[30] The first commissioner under the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan was appointed at the end of 1949 and began to report on the religious situation from 1950. The government of each union republic and the *oblispolkom* of each province had to appoint these *upolnomochennye*. Therefore, the bureaucratic system of the local government had an impact on the activities of these commissioners. It was often the case that due to a lack of financial and logistic support, the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan were not able to submit the complete report as demanded by the council in Moscow. Similar cases existed in other republics and provinces of the USSR, when the council in Moscow often criticized its commissioners for the delay and even incorrect information on the ground.[31]

In his report, Mirzobek Bodurov, the first CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, pointed out the specific features of the religious situation in this province, which were the presence of the two different Muslim (Ismaili and Sunni) communities and the absence of mosques and prayer rooms in Gorno-Badakhshan. These features were repeatedly pointed

---

[29] Sabrina Petra Ramet, 'Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev', in Ramet, ed., in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, pp. 31-52.

[30] 'Introduction to the collection of documents for the office of *Upolnomochennyi soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov Tadzhikskoi SSR*: The plenipotentiary representative for the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), later the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA) in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic', see BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, 1944 -1962 (27 June 1966).

[31] For more on the nature of the documents prepared by the representatives of CARC and later CRA, see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 2-8.

out in reports by all of the commissioners in this province from 1950 to the late 1980s.[32] This being the case, the commissioner in the Tajik SSR, seems to have remained unaware of the distinct features of the religious situation in Gorno-Badakhshan. For instance, years later the CARC commissioner in Dushanbe demanded from his colleague in Gorno-Badakhshan detailed descriptions and even statistics about the mosques and prayer houses. Initially, Bodurov also complained to the chairman of the CARC in Moscow that he did not know what tasks he was supposed to perform.[33] Having perhaps realised the need for a detailed study of the religious situation or the need to work with local religious figures, Bodurov requested the council in Moscow to allow him to hire one of the Ismaili *khalifa*s as an assistant. The council categorically rejected this request, stating that the commissioner was a state worker, but the *dukhovenstvo* represented religious societies. As a state official, the CARC commissioner only had to deal with the religious issues that were raised by believers, clerics and local authorities and which had to be solved with reference to the Soviet legislation on religion. The provincial commissioner was allowed to receive support from the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR, but not from religious personnel. [34] This refusal clearly defined the legal boundaries between the CARC commissioner as a Soviet state official, and the *khalifa*s as the representative of religious society.

The correspondence between the CARC and its first commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Mirzobek Bodurov further reveals the continuous demands from the former to the latter for a detailed study of the activity of religious figures and ritual performance, in particular among the Ismaili population in this province. In the beginning, lacking specific instructions from the CARC, the commissioner was not able to deal with issues such as recording the number of people selected as *khalifa*s or dealing with disputes that rose among the Ismailis over conducting certain religious rites. Gradually, however, the council replied to Bodurov that in all matters related to the appointment of religious figures and the

[32]Starting from 1950 to the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, there were six CARC/CRA *upolnomochennye* working in Gorno-Badakhshan.

[33] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Otchetnii doklad o rabote religioznykh kul'tov GBAO predstavliaemo v sovet po delam religioznykh kul'tov SSSR, ego upolnomochennogo Soveta po Tadzhikskoi SSR, obkomu partii i oblispolkomu GBAO' (26 January 1950), p.1.

[34] GA GBAO, f.110, op. 1, d. 1, 'Perepiski s sovet po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR i Tadzhikskoi SSR', see the reply from CARC Chairman Polianskii to Bodurov and Hamidov, (10 September 1952), p. 25.

conducting of rites he had to act according to the legislation that recognized the rights of religious societies to select their own religious leaders and perform a practice that was permitted. Ironically, recognizing these rights by no means afforded the clergy the right to promote their religious activity or involve officials in it. The CARC representative in the republic, i.e., the Tajik SSR, made it clear to Bodurov what the main task of provincial commissioner was:

> Regarding your role as *upolnomochennyi* in the field of religious affairs, I advise you to maintain a close relationship mainly with the local party and government officials. As for the professional relationship in solving certain issues with the local clergy and believers, I warn you of the necessity to comply with the maximum degree of caution, being tactical and having a delicate approach to them, which is very important in the context of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast.[35]

According to the general principle of the council, its commissioners were supposed to report on the activities of every religious group in the republics and provinces. Nevertheless, it appears that the CARC continuously demanded more details on the Ismaili believers from its commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan. For instance in 1954, Polanskii, the CARC chairman, wrote to commissioner Bodurov that the council knew very little about the Ismailis and that the commissioner had to remedy this situation by providing material that characterised this sect in as much detail as possible.[36]

As a Soviet official and party bureaucrat, the commissioner had to participate in various activities by the local government such as conducting propaganda among the believers, who were at the same time members of the *kolkhoze*s. The propaganda lectures and seminars conducted by the CARC commissioners during their visit to the *kolkhoze*s included that of maintaining work discipline and raising productivity. The *kolkhoz*es were the main organisation providing employment and space for social relations, and also guaranteeing a relatively free milieu for religious activity. Instances of religious figures influencing the members of the *kolkhoz* to make *khudoi* (sacrifices) during heavy rainfall were reported in the 1950s.[37] Hence, the first targets of anti-religious propaganda were the

[35] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 8, (1 March 1954), p. 31.

[36] GA GBAO, f. 110. op. 1, d.1, 'Perepiski s soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR po Tadzhikskoi SSR'. Instruction by the CARC Chairman Polianskii to Mirzobek Bodurov, (27 August 1954), pp. 68-69.

[37] *Khudoi*: the sacrificing of animals to God and offering a feast to neighbours and the community by the family to help someone recover from an illness or to celebrate their surviving an accident or natural calamity. It was also conducted to memorialize a deceased relative.

rituals that were considered detrimental to individual well-being and health, and the economy of households and *kolkhoz*es. The commissioner Bodurov, immediately described *khudoi* as the practice of a feudal stratum from the pre-Soviet period, which was mainly conducted on the occasion of a death and during times of natural calamity. He noted that in the past the *pir*s and *khalifa*s themselves encouraged sacrifice in order to maintain their influence among the population.[38] Therefore, the CARC commissioner criticised the gatherings for communal prayers and *khudoi* particularly on the occasion of natural calamities such as heavy rainfall or avalanche that decimated livestock and productivity in the *kolkhoze*s. He often noted that the practice of these rituals contributed to an increase in religious sentiment among the members of the *kolkhoze*s.[39]

The commissioner Bodurov was initially compelled to complain about the financial and administrative barriers to his work in the province. For example, the lack of a typewriter often led to delays in submitting his reports. Most of the time he had to rely on the information provided by various informants on the ground as without sufficient travel expenses he was not able to check the accuracy of this information. He complained to the council that, despite working in harsh conditions in the remote and border province, he had not received adequate logistical support. He noted that party and state officials in the districts provided little support to help uncover information about the infringements of the law by the clergy. The commissioner also requested the council to provide him with a clear procedure for registering religious figures.[40] Similar problems of working without an office or the provincial authorities often ignoring the newly-appointed CARC commissioners existed in other parts of the USSR.[41] The problems between the commissioners and local

[38] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2,'Otchetnii doklad', (30 September 1950).

[39] In their reports on the celebration of religious festivals of *Id-i Qurbon* and *Id-i Ramazon,* as well as instances of sacrificing animals during funeral ceremonies the commissioner pointed to the decrease in livestock productivity of the *kolkhozes*. As an example, see the CARC commissioner's report on *Id-i Ramazon* on see GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 3, (28 October 1950), pp. 17-22.

[40] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5. Report by the commissioner Mirzobek Bodurov on the 'Conditions of the Sunni and Ismaili believers and clergy in the territory of the GBAO', (1 January 1957), p. 24, and his subsequent report on 'The religiosity of the unregistered Muslim communities in the territory of the GBAO', (9 August 1957), pp. 24-29.

[41] See Larisa Koroliova and Aleksei Korolev. 'Vlast' i Islam v SSSR v poslevoennyi period (po materialam Penzenskogo raiona)', available at http://scepsis.net/library/id_1840.html

officials also had their roots in officialdom's support for the hard-line approach that categorically rejected the presence of religion in Soviet society.[42]

In Gorno-Badakhshan, another challenge to the work of the CARC commissioner in studying the religious situation was the unclear classification of which religious rituals needed to be conducted by officially recognized religious figures. Regular and holiday collective prayers and other rituals, conducted in registered mosques in other parts of the Tajik SSR and Central Asia, were deemed legitimate and approved by SADUM.[43] One of the reasons for the vagueness in evaluating religious rituals as either legitimate or illegal was related to the absence of prayer rooms and mosques in Gorno-Badakhshan. The statistics show that there were 47 mosques and prayer houses, in Gorno-Badakhshan prior to the 1936. Most of these buildings were destroyed or closed down, and in 1954 the commissioner listed 14 buildings of mosques and six prayer rooms. Most of these buildings were used as storage for the *kolkhoz*es, and were turned into schools and other offices for state use. Three of mosques two in Wanj and one in Qal'a-i khumb (Sunni-populated districts) were still used for collective prayers. The commissioner pointed out that the local government in these districts did not have clear policy to prevent people from using these buildings as mosques.[44]

By 1954 the council in Moscow had instructed the commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan that even in the absence of mosques and prayer houses in places where religiosity was high, it was not correct to use administrative measures to prevent believers from conducting rites. In some cases, this would create an unhealthy atmosphere among believers. The commissioner therefore had to confine his observations to record the activities of individual religious figures from the Ismaili and Sunni populations in the province. Moreover, the council stressed that there was no need to list life-cycle rituals, but instead it wanted a detailed description of how these rituals were practiced by the community and each family.[45]

---

[42] See Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Harvard University), pp. 78-82.

[43] Ibid., pp. 147-156.

[44] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 9, (1 July 1954), p. 32.

[45] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 1, 'Perepiski s soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR po Tadzhikskoi SSR', see iinstruction by CARC Chairman Polianskii to Mirzobek Bodurov, (27 August 1954), pp. 68-69.

In 1958, a request was submitted by the population of Qal'a-i Khumb district to open a mosque in its centre. This mosque's building had been turned into storage for the *kolkhoz* during collectivization and then handed over to the district *raipotrebsoiuz* (consumers' union). The community appealed for it to be given back from the *raipotrebsoiuz* and used as mosque. The commissioner, however, did not favour the opening of a mosque in this border district. However, he did not have the authority to agree to this petition, and considered the request to be illegal since believers were supposed to appeal to the local government and then to the republican religious administration, i.e., the office of the *qoziyot* of the Tajik SSR. Hence neither the local government nor the office of the *qoziyot* responded to the request of the group of believers to open a mosque in the district of Qal'a-i Khumb.[46]

Between 1958 and 1960 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union issued special decrees, included 'measures to stop pilgrimage to the so-called sacred places' and to prevent violations of Soviet legislation by the *dukhovenstvo*. Other decrees called for a curb on the 'anti-social activity' of the clergy, especially those who received material benefit from their practices. The local party units and government officials in Gorno-Badakhshan, as in other parts of Soviet Union, were instructed to monitor the compliance of the believers with the legislation on religion, and to enforce the ban on religious societies and on religious figures, who preached among children, the youth and women. Alongside these measures, CARC also instructed its commissioners not to monitor any administrative interference by the local bureaucracy in the activity of religious figures and believers.

The renewed anti-religious campaign also called for an improvement in the quality of the assessment of the religious situation, and an intensification of the anti-religious propaganda campaign by local officials.[47] The reports by CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan provided contradictory accounts of the implementation of these decrees aimed at curbing and limiting religious activity from 1959 to 1964. In this province, the main religious activities such as collective prayer were still taking place even during the years of the renewed anti-religious campaign by the Soviet leader, Khrushchev. In 1959, the

[46] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, (16 August 1958), pp. 45-46.

[47] For more on these decrees and their implication for different religious groups in the former Soviet Union see Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and its Successor States*, pp. 33 -35.

commissioner Bodurov listed dozens of religious figures who were practicing faith-healing, and called upon the financial authorities to impose a tax on them.[48]

In the years of the renewed anti-religious campaign almost every annual report by the CARC commissioner included several instances in which religious figures were accused of extracting personal benefit from performing religious rituals on the occasion of life-cycle events, religious festivals, as well as practicing faith-healing. For instance, between 1959 and 1964 there were cases when *mullo*s were fined or sentenced for carrying out illegal healing activity in Gorno-Badakhshan. It was reported that in other parts of the Tajik SSR, more individuals were sentenced for illegal activities such as organising religious classes for teenagers and youth, and for polygamy.[49] While cases of *mullo*s and *khalifa*s being sentenced for underground religious teaching were not reported in Gorno-Badakhshan, some practices such as making a living out *khairiyot* (charity) by the *mullo*s prompted the authorities to respond with strict measures.[50]

The second CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Arifov highlighted the success of Soviet religious policy in diminishing the influence of unregistered religious figures in the relatively developed areas. He revealed that the itinerant *mullo*s changed tactics and discreetly performed rituals in remote areas where the population did not have access to education, health and other state-provided services. The Alay valley in the Murgab district on the border of the Tajik SSR and the Kyrgyz SSR, with its 370 Ismaili Tajik and Sunni Kyrgyz households was one of the places where Islam was reported to have a strong influence among population. In this valley, it was reported that the itinerant *mullo*s lived well, based on their faith-healing and amulet-making activities. The *kolkhoz* built a hospital there, but the shortage of medical personnel meant that the population had to appeal to the services of the *mullo*s. For this reason, Arifov recommended that the local authorities send medical personnel to this valley to serve the population. The *kolkhoz* built a club (centre for cultural activities), but no events were held there to strengthen atheist propaganda

[48] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, (3 March 1959), p. 9.

[49] See criminal reports on individuals from the Tajik SSR sentenced for illegal religious activities in the collection of CARC documents by D. Yu. Arapov, *Islam i Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo (1944-1990)* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 366-373.

[50] For instance, the party and district officials made severe warnings to the Sunni Kyrgyz *mullo*s either to stop the practice of *khairiyot* or to face persecution. See GARF, 6991, op. 3. d. 1741, (9 January, 1965), pp. 21-22.

amongst the youth.[51] This view of religion having a stronger influence among the population of the remote Allay valley resembled that of the account of religiosity that was provided by Soviet scholars and media. In their account religious activity became stronger in areas that modern health care and education had not yet reached. Islam was therefore considered a mainly rural phenomenon.[52]

From 1959 to 1964, the nature of the work of the CARC commissioners in this province also changed from one of spreading propaganda to one with a greater emphasis on demanding that believers and local officials should comply with Soviet legislation on religion. As the evidence in the annual and quarterly reports for 1959 and 1964 demonstrates, the CARC commissioner often warned the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s that they would be held responsible if they violated the legislation on religion. This warning itself had little effect and between 1959 and 1961 dozens of *mullo*s in villages were assembling people for collective prayer in private *mehmon-khona*s (guesthouses). The itinerant *mullo*s were reportedly even preaching about *ruza* (fasting) to children, the youth, and even the members of the Communist Party. They also visited households to pray and collect *fitri ruza*.[53]

The continuous demand from the CARC for detailed analyses of religious situation in Gorno-Badakhshan, and the commissioners' need for instructions to deal with specific religious issues cannot be seen as a purely bureaucratic exercise. It was rather a pragmatic strategy that resulted in registering limited numbers of religious figures and pressurising the rest. Formally this registration of a limited numbers of religious figures appeared a success, but in fact, it resulted in creating a targeted group for the bureaucratic monitoring of the religious situation by the *komissii sodeistviia* (assistance commissions) under the *ispolkom*s of the districts. The CARC commissioner noted that instances of violation of the law had decreased among the registered Ismaili *khalifa*s. However, illegal activity was noted to be widespread among the Sunni *mullo*s in the Qal'a-i Khumb and Murgab districts. In these districts the itinerant *mullo*s challenged the registration process by

[51] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (23 December 1961), p. 3.

[52] For the summary of the Soviet experts views on the strong persistence of religion Islam among the population of Central Asia, see Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan* (Philadelphia, 1989), pp. 8-9.

[53] *fitri ruza*: payment collected after *iftor* during the month of Ramazon, usually estimated in the reports as amounting to a few roubles. See GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (6 April 1962) , pp. 11-15.

preventing the registered clergy from conducting religious rituals during wedding and funerals. Local officials in these two districts remained reluctant to proceed with the registration of *domullos*.[54]

2.4. Local Officials and Central State Religious Policy

The following section will explore in more detail the activity of local government officials in executing Soviet religious policy in Gorno-Badakhshan. In the period under study, the implementation of Soviet religious policy at the local level took different forms and varied over time due to the appearance of new resolutions and decisions. From 1950 to the end of Soviet period in 1991, the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan remained the principal party state agent dealing with religious issues among the Muslim community, according to Soviet legislation. However, despite being authorised to carry out this task, the commissioners were often unable to solve the problems raised by the believers, but instructed the religious figures to appeal first to *sel'skii aktivy* (rural activists) and *raiiaktivy* (the district activists). Often the commissioners had to call on local officials to respond in an adequate and positive manner to the issues raised by the religious figures. They also had to stress to the local officials the rights granted to the believers under Soviet law. In those cases when local officials mistreated the religious figures, the commissioners did not stand apart but called for religious figures to be treated with respect as elders in the community.

The various local officials, including the head and the staff of the KGB unit in the province had often pressured religious figures. The last Soviet CRA commissioner in this province for instance, recounted that in several occasions he had to complain to the *obkom* party about administrative interference in the activity of religious figures. He had also severely criticized the misinformation about religious situation that the provincial KGB unit was providing to the central Soviet authorities in Moscow.[55]

One of the issues that led religious figures to complain about the local government officials was the tax imposed by the Soviet government on the income of clergy from performing

[54] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, (3 March 1960), p. 19.

[55] Parpishoev Akobirsho worked as the last Soviet CRA commissioner under the *oblispolkom* of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast from 1986 to 1991. (Information from interview with him in Khorog, 15 July 2011). For more on his recollections of the challenges and responsibilities of working as the CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, and his criticism of the other state officials who pressurised religious figures, see also the article by M. Said, 'Kadri Shurawi' (Soviet Personnel), *Millat*, (1 May 2012), p. 4.

rituals. The issues of taxation seemed to have been confused and unclear throughout the period as the commissioners do not provide accurate statistics on the tax paid by registered and unregistered religious figures. It appears that in most of the cases many of the religious figures in the province did not report their income from performing rituals. With the registration of the clergy, the financial authorities in each district were obliged to tax them. However, this created confusion among the registered religious figures who at the same time were members of the *kolkhoze*s. The registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s complained to the commissioner that the financial authorities were only imposing tax on them when they conducted religious rituals. The clergy deemed it wrong and argued that they should be taxed on their work in the *kolkhoze*s. In many instances, the registered clergy complained that the fiscal authorities did not impose tax on the unregistered religious figures. These unregistered *mullo*s were also making income from performing rituals in wedding, funerals, as well from selling amulet and talisman for the people who requested them to do so.

The provincial government often had to order to the finance departments in the districts to take strict measures and impose tax on the income which the *khalifa*s and *domullo*s earned from conducting religious rites during wedding and funerals. This kind of taxation was legal under a decree of the USSR Council of the Ministers in March 1946: 'On the procedure of imposing tax on religious clergy.' What however, remained unclear regarding taxation was the way the local financial authorities actually collected tax and whether the clergy were fully aware of the relevant decree? The issue of taxation was complicated by a) an incomplete record of the numbers of clergy and the amounts of tax paid; b) complaints from the official *khalifa*s and *domullos* that it was inappropriately imposed on them; and c) the disagreements, and differences in the policy of taxation pursued by the fiscal units in the districts.

The interaction between various social actors blurred the dividing lines between the opposing categories of believers and religious figures on the one hand and state officials, party members, propagandists and activists on the other. For instance, in the district of Murgab, an unregistered Sunni *mullo* named Nizom, who was notoriously greedy but influential, ridiculed the official religious figures and prevented them from carrying out their duties. However, he was invited by the secretary of the district unit of the Komsomol to perform religious rites at his house, something for which the secretary was punished by the *raikom* (district party committee). In this complicated situation, the CARC

representative preferred to call on the financial authorities in the district to levy heavy taxes on the itinerant *mullo*s.[56]

With the renewed pressure on religious activity, the CARC commissioners often criticized local officials for neither preventing nor prosecuting those who instigated violations of the religious legislation. This indicates the ambiguous and changing position of the CARC commissioners in their interaction with religious figures and local authorities. In the mid-1950s, the commissioner Bodurov often called on local officials to protect the rights of religious figures within the confines of the Soviet legislation. From 1962 to 1964, however, Arifov, the new CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan appeared more active in criticizing the inabilities of officials to curb religious activity. In the early 1960s Arifov, often complained to the provincial authorities that the local *ispolkom*s neither charged religious figures over their illegal activity nor discouraged the population from practicing religious rituals.[57]

The officials' ability to dissuade the clergy from conducting rites became especially limited as party members themselves participated in the life-cycle related religious ceremonies. This was considered to be the worst scenario in the context of atheist propaganda. In this situation, it was difficult for the commissioner to identify those officials who were practicing religion, for instance fasting during the month of Ramazon or those who were appealing to the *mullo*s for *tumor*s (talismans) and *tishtob*s (amulets). This difficulty in identifying those officials and party members who practiced religion suggested that the focus of loyalty to the Soviet state or to local community and religious tradition was unclear. It also revealed how social status and religious identity were negotiated in the context of state pressure on the one hand and the influence of religious authorities on the other. Even during the times of renewed pressure some of the itinerant *mullo*s had an influence over the activities of registered religious figures. For instance, when the registered religious figures in the Murgab district prevented the itinerant *mullo*s from conducting religious rites, the latter responded by stating that people should not seek the service of the official religious figures. In this case, the state's strategy of registering some clerics and pitting them against the rest of the unregistered clergy backfired when the

[56] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, (23 October 1964), p. 6.

[57] These reports with complaints were sent to the CARC, the secretary of the *obkom*, the chairman of the *oblispolkom* and the head of the provincial Committee for State Security (KGB).

unregistered ones effectively removed the official *domullo*s from their positions.[58] For this reason the local party and government in this district organised a meeting to warn religious figures against such violations of the legislation on religion.[59]

Instances in which both officials and party members were practicing religion complicated the local government's implementation of the state's religious policy to segregate a stratum of the population as the *dukhovenstvo,* from the new Soviet citizens. In the remote and thinly populated villages of Gorno-Badakhshan, officials such as the chairmen of the *kolkhoze*s and *sel'sovets*, and other party members, as well as religious figures, were related to each other. These religious figures and officials often had to interact especially when they participated in religious rituals on the occasion of funeral and weddings, as well as other life-cycle rites. On these occasions, they emerged as local actors to negotiate their role between what the state demanded and what was required by tradition, religion and community. Hence, the role of the state, with its anti-religious policy and ideology, cannot be seen as having triumphed over religion in this specific regional context. State and religion despite being proclaimed separate, remained in the process of continuous engagement and evolution in this province.

The problems created by the *ispolkom*s of the districts were delaying the appointment and processing of applications for registering formal *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. In 1960 the provincial authorities agreed to register one religious figure in each *sel'sovet* of Gorno-Badakhshan. From that time the commissioner urged the *oblispolkom* to put pressure on the district authorities to provide all the necessary documents *odnovremennyi uchiot* (registration) for the official clergy.[60] Apparently the registration situation did not go smoothly as the *ispolkoms* of the districts and *sel'sovet*s were unable to extend full control over the widespread activity of the itinerant *mullo*s. Ultimately, the influence of the itinerant clergy prevailed, especially in places where the local authorities ignored the activities of aged believers, especially women visiting shrines and *mullo*s who practiced faith-ealing and teaching. In 1961, for instance, it was reported that a seventy year old *bibi-otun* (female religious teacher) from the village of Gumun in the district of Qal'a-i Khumb continued to 'fool' visitors to come to her house by revering the grave of her father saying he was saint. The local authorities knew about the activities of this *bibi-otun* but did not

[58] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, (7 May 1965), p. 11.

[59] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1741, (9 January 1965), pp. 21-22.

[60] *Odnovremennyi uchiot*: a census and registration of official religious figures.

take any measures, considering that she was old and would die soon. It was also revealed that three shrines were open for pilgrimage even if they no longer had *shaykh*s to maintain them.[61] This pointed to the fact that shrine visitation had not completely ceased but continued throughout the period.

The territories of the itinerant *mullo*s were not limited to the villages where they lived. The itinerant *mullo*s from the districts of Qal'a-i Khumb, Wanj, and even from the Ismaili-populated districts of Gorno-Badakhshan reportedly travelled to the densely-populated areas near Dushanbe and Orjonikidzeobod (present the city of Wahdat) for a few months and returned with substantial material gains.[62] It was usual for religious figures to move to different places to practice faith-healing. More instances of this activity were uncovered by the authorities in the early 1960s. However, the local authorities in many cases remained reluctant to take administrative and legal measures to limit the activity of the itinerant *mullo*s. For instance, the administration of a *kolkhoz* in the district of Qal'a-i Khumb provided a false record saying that a *mullo* named Khoja from Rizway village was present at his work, while in fact he was travelling to the city of Dushanbe and its surrounding areas to make money from healing practices. This *mullo* was also accused of having five wives, each with a few children, living in different villages. Upon receiving this information, the commissioner questioned the district authorities about how this *mullo* was able to maintain those five wives, and about his attendance at his work in the *kolkhoz*. It was noted that the district party unit knew about this *mullo* and had summoned him several times to meet with the second secretary of the district party committee. Despite this, the *mullo* continued 'fooling' people. The commissioner further questioned whether the *raiispolkom* had made the right decision to free this 'parasite' from taxation.[63]

A similar case of an itinerant religious figure defying the local authorities was reported in the Wanj district where an Ismaili *mullo* named Zinatshoev Qalandar successfully practiced faith-healing among the Sunni population. The local authorities uncovered his activity, and the *mullo* acknowledged that he was unemployed and needed to make a living. He testified to the authorities that he would stop his religious activity, but then he

[61] *shaykh*s: custodians of the shrines. According to the estimation of the unregistered religious figures in GBAO by 1958 there were 56 *shaykh*s, see GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, (16 January 1958), p. 32.

[62] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (23 March 1961), p. 7.

[63] Ibid., p. 8.

resumed it. Arifov called on the authorities to suppress the activity of these itinerant *mullo*s:

> Zinatshoev himself is an Ismaili, but has great popularity among the Sunni believers. It is so sad, but this parasite continues to deceive the members of the Communist Party. For the benefit of the state's policy, it is necessary to take measures against Zinatshoev in Wanj and against *mullo* Khoja in Qala'-i Khumb as the direct violators of Soviet legislation on religious cults.[64]

Arifov further contended that in these districts the *ispolkom*s were fundamentally unable to judge and limit the activity of the *mullo*s who worked openly, let alone deal with those who worked clandestinely.[65] It was not, however, so simple a matter as blaming the authorities for not speeding up the process of registration and controlling other religious activities. In most instances, in districts such as Qal'a-i Khumb, the *mullo*s did not wish to register as they would become liable for tax or charges that would put an end to their 'parasitic' activity.[66]

It seems to have been the case that the local authorities were often criticized for their poor work in assuring the compliance of religious figures with the legislation in the years 1959-1964. For instance, when registered *khalifa*s in the Ishkashim district did not assemble for a meeting with the commissioner, he criticized the district authorities for paying insufficient attention to spread atheist propaganda among the population. The commissioner wrote that in some *sel'sovet*s of this district the *mullo*s and *khalifa*s, especially those who were not registered, were functioning very well, conducting rites and systematically organising gatherings of believers. However, the district authorities neither punished nor taxed the clergy and were simply not willing to offend the religious figures.

The local authorities neglected the implementation of new Soviet civil life-cycle rituals and other decisions by the *oblispolkom*, such as arranging a special area to be set aside for burials.[67] For the commissioner, all the aforementioned instances constituted sufficient reason to conclude that the population remained unaware of the Central Committee of the Communist Party decrees banning shrine pilgrimage taken in 1959 and to enforce 'strict observance of the 1961 laws on religious cults', as well as the decisions of the *oblispolkom* to re-register religious figures and reduce their numbers. These criticisms of the work of

[64] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (28 March 1961), pp. 8-10.

[65] Ibid., p. 10.

[66] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d.17 (6 April 1962), p. 12.

[67] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, (23 October 1964), p. 5

those in government, their reluctance to register clerics in time, to intercept illegal religious activity or to improve the quality of atheist propaganda, were not only pertinent to Gorno-Badakhshan but also found in other parts of the Soviet Union.[68] Reports from this province also hint at the underlying reasons behind the reluctance and passivity of local officials when it came to working according to the instructions from central policy-makers. Factors such as kinship ties, community bonds, respect for the authority of religious figures as elders, in the Muslim context all influenced the ways in which the local authorities responded to the demands from above. As commissioner Arifov reported in 1964:

> For many years up to the present time in the *sel'sovet* of Nud of (the district of Ishkashim), the itinerant clergy who are not controlled by anyone perform all kinds of religious rituals. In complete freedom, the itinerant clergy systematically gather believers through all sorts of fraudulent ways. The vice chair of the *raiispolkom*, Bakhtiyorov, whose duty is to control all this, does not want to offend the clergy. The social assistance commission for monitoring the violation of the legislation on religion does not function in this district.[69]

For all of these reasons, local actors in the field of religious policy played an ambiguous and risky role in not exposing the activity of religious figures, including the itinerant *mullo*s. These examples also reveal the complexity of the interactions between various structures and actors: the CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, local party and government officials, as well as registered *khalifas*, *domullo*s, and unregistered *mullo*s.

2.5. Bureaucratization of Religious Policy

By the mid-1960s, new bureaucratic structures, such as a) the assistance commission under the *ispolkom*s of each districts of Gorno-Badakhshan to control believers' compliance with the legislation on religion; b) social commissions to implement the new Soviet rituals and spread atheist propaganda, were formed in this province. The new Soviet rituals were a set of secular rituals ranging from the occasion of life-cycle events to that of seasonal celebrations and the major events and achievements of the Soviet government. The CARC commissioner therefore needed to work directly with these commissions under each *ispolkom* to instruct and guide them in dealing with religious issues.

The assistance commissions were formed under the *ispolkom* of each districts of the province from 1962 onwards. Initially, despite the special procedure laid out by the Council of the Ministers of the Tajik SSR to set up these commissions, the *ispolkom*s of

[68] See *Islam in Soviet Union*, pp. 607-681.

[69] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, (20 October 1964), p. 6.

the districts considered them a mere formality. According to the procedure, in each district, the deputy chairman of the *ispolkom* had to chair these commissions at the district level and the chairman of the *sel'sovet* headed the sub-commissions in their village councils. When the first commissions in the districts of Gorno-Badakhshan were formed they were headed by accountants and school directors. The CARC commissioner criticized the appointment of some officials, who were not aware of their tasks and duties in these commissions. In most districts these commissions were just a list of names, without a plan, guidance or specific tasks allocated to them by the *ispolkom*s. The commissioner complained that it was for this reason that the commissions failed to ensure the compliance of citizens with the legislation. These commissions failed to protect the constitutional rights of believers and were reluctant to spearhead anti-religious propaganda.[70]

In the Qal'a-i Khumb district, where the directors of the schools headed the commissions, unregistered *mullo*s spread their faith-healing and preaching activity, especially after the deaths of the formally-appointed religious figures. These *mullo*s did not report their earnings from conducting *nikoh* (Islamic matrimony contract and ceremony) and conducting prayers during funerals. This contradicted the demands of state legislation, according to which the clergy had to report their income from ritual performance on the occasion of births, marriages or deaths. According to the civil law, a wedding first needed to be registered with the ZAGS service.[71] In practice, however, without the *nikoh* a marriage was not recognized by the Muslim community.[72] In observing the relationship between marriage and ZAGS among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan, the Soviet ethnographer, Monogarova pointed out that Ismaili *khalifa*s would not conduct a *nikoh* (religious matrimonial ceremony) for a bride and groom if the couple did not registered their marriage with ZAGS office.[73] Her observation about the religious wedding ceremony, and ZAGS registration, however cannot be generalised to the whole province. In the

[70] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 10, (17 February 1969), p. 4.

[71] ZAGS-short for the *otdel zapisi aktov grazhdanskogo sostoianiia* was the Civil Registry office in the Soviet Union.

[72] For more on the role and meaning of *nikoh* and ZAGS among Muslim community in a village in Soviet Tajikistan, see Gillian Tett, 'Ambiguous Alliances: Marriage and Identity in a Muslim Village in Soviet Tajikistan', unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 153-154.

[73] For recording the cases of ZAGS and new type of wedding among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan, see L. F. Monogarova, *Pereobrazovaniia v bytu i kul'ture pripamirskikh narodnostei* (Moscow, 1972), pp. 143-145.

remote villages the ritual of *nikoh* was performed in advance in most, if not all, of the cases before the ZAGS in that period. As these rituals were conducted by itinerant *mullo*s who kept no records, it was difficult for the financial organs to estimate the income of the religious figures and to impose tax on them accordingly.[74] Hence the population continued to use both the service of itinerant *mullo*s to conduct *nikoh* and also later to register the wedding with the ZAGS.

In order to eliminate the shortcomings of these commissions the CARC commissioner in the province raised their problems directly with the secretary of the party committees and the chairmen of each districts. If the situation was not resolved on the ground, he had to refer the matter to the provincial authorities.[75] By the 1970s, it was noted that the *ispolkom*s had appointed appropriate officials as the chairmen for these assistance commissions. Special files were created to record the activity of these commissions in ensuring the compliance of religious figures. The members of the commissions had to monitor the instances of religious rites conducted by the official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. At that time, most of these commissions were comprised of 11 members in each district with a total of 232 members in the 38 *sel'sovet*s of the province.[76]

While the formal demands, structure and tasks of these commissions were similar; their activity in implementing religious policy differed from place to place. A chairman of a commission in a *sel'sovet* in the Murgab district himself joined the group of believers in fasting, while not reporting how *mullo*s attempted to organise collective prayers in private houses in several villages. It appeared that the district *ispolkom* did not monitor the activity of the assistance commissions.[77] Instances like these were widespread, but seem not to have been reported by members of the commissions, or by district *ispolkom*s to the provincial authorities. Apart from the assistance commissions there were public and administrative commissions that were supposed to complement each other but actually complicated the process of administering religious policy in this period. In this process,

[74] The instances of te population using dual services of both arranging documents with *ZAGS* and conducting *nikoh* (religious matrimonial ceremony) were common. See, notes by CARC commissioners, GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 19, (14 February 1966), p. 4.

[75] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, (10 December 1969), p. 23.

[76] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (29 January 1970), p. 33.

[77] Ibid., p. 35.

some of the primary tasks of the CARC representative, especially monitoring the activity of religious figures, were transferred to these commissions.[78]

The bureaucratisation of all spheres of activity under Brezhnev from 1965 to 1982 also engulfed the activities of the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA) on the ground. Most of the reports by the *ispolkom* of the districts, only listed the planned tasks and measures of the assistance commissions. The progress of the work of these commissions at least featured in the formal reports, in line with new decisions, decrees and instructions from the central government, the republic's party committee and the provincial authorities. New decrees were issued, especially from 1965 onwards, pointing to the excesses of the anti-religious campaign between 1959 and 1964. Implementing new decisions and decrees became a bureaucratic tradition in itself, to the point that a specific case of violating a law in one province needed to be discussed by the party bureau in other provinces.[79]

By assessing the activities of the social assistance commissions in the districts, the CRA commissioners had to carry out bureaucratic tasks. They become responsible for reporting on the activities of the local officials and members of the commissions who had to lead explanatory work among the clergy. This, however, did not mean that the CRA commissioners became completely dependent on the information provided by the commissions. The commissioners continued to update their study of religious life through meetings, interviews and discussions, especially with the official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. The CRA commissioner in the centre of the province, members of the assistance commissions in each district and anonymous informants of the State Security Committee in each location formed a triangle of surveillance to report on religious activity in Gorno-Badakhshan. Hence, the official *khalifa*s and *dommullo*s inside this system of monitoring acted as informants to the local officials, to the commissioner and to the security agents.[80]

---

[78] See Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', pp. 440-442.

[79] The archives on the work of these assistance commissions in the districts of Gorno-Badakhshan mostly contain the lists of the members of these commissions and plans but less detailed analysis of the results of their work. For more information on the activities of these commissions, see documents in GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 2, d. 2; d. 3; d. 4; d. 5; d. 6 and d. 7 for each districts.

[80] According to some of the interviewees for my thesis it was really very difficult to judge who was working for the office of the Committee for State Security (KGB). It was even noted that some of the religious figures, registered and unregistered alike, were noted to have been providing 'information' for the security service.

2.6. Spread of Atheist Propaganda

While Soviet officialdom was engaging with the Muslim clergy and institutions on a widespread basis, it nevertheless continued to pursue an official anti-religious policy. With the all-union call to strengthen the atheist campaign in 1954, and the pressure on religious activity from 1959 to 1964, atheist policies spread to remote areas such as Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Tajik SSR. The Soviet regime persistently promoted atheism as a policy propagated through education, the media, academic research and public writing, in order to combat the influence of religion. The other main means of spreading atheist propaganda was via regular and occasional lectures, seminars and conferences by the *Znanie* (Knowledge) society and members of Komsomol, by teachers in extra-curricular lessons in secondary and higher academic establishments, labour unions, women's councils and youth clubs.[81] The cinema was another powerful vehicle for spreading anti-religious propaganda.

The *Znanie* society regularly organised atheist propaganda campaigns sending brigades of lecturers to the *kolkhoz*es and *sel'sovet*s. The members of this society also lectured on atheist themes over the radio. However, it was noted that these lectures were mainly held among the intelligentsia, as the *kolkhoz* members did not attend them very often. The quality of the lectures was very poor, lacking any visual aids. Films on atheist themes were rarely shown in remote villages. The CARC commissioner Arifov proposed opening atheist clubs in the central town of the province and district centres where lectures on the atheist themes would be conducted. The atheist policy was especially weak in the districts where the itinerant *mullo*s remained active, especially in the districts of Murgab, Qal'a-i Khumb and Wanj.[82] From the mid-1960s onwards, the atheist policy received more attention due to criticism of the excessive administrative pressures on religious activity during Khrushchev's period in power. Nevertheless, in Gorno-Badakhshan it was reported in the early 1960s that atheist propaganda was considered poor and was not spread due to the lack of visual aids, films, atheist rooms, clubs and youth centres, even in the main towns.

[81] The *Znanie* (Knowledge) society was formed in 1947 and by 1977 it comprised about 28,000 members across the country. This increasing membership however, could not adequately reflect the quality of the atheist propaganda as many of its members did not undertake any activity and most of its local units did not function. For more on the activity of the *Znanie* society in the Tajik SSSR, see *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan*, pp. 48-49.

[82] GARF, 6991, op. 3, d. 1740, (2 February 1964), p. 20.

The success and improvement of atheist propaganda were measured each year based on the increase in the numbers of lectures and seminars, especially those held on the eve of religious festivals among the Muslims of the Soviet Union.[83] In Gorno-Badakhshan for instance, in 1968 it was estimated that 805 experts, including 50 from the *Znanie* society, party and Komsomol members, were sent to each district and village for atheist campaigns during religious festivals. "Atheist week" was a special event organised by the *obkom* and *raikom* propagandists; it tackled various themes such as 'the origin and content of the Qur'an' and 'Religion: its origin and essence'. It was continuously reported and believed that due to the increase of these measures, certain religious practices, such as *ruza* (fasting), had disappeared among children and the youth and were only observed in individuals aged forty and above in the Sunni-populated districts of Gorno-Badakhshan.[84]

The numbers of lectures on scientific and atheist themes by the *Znanie* society and other cultural and enlightenment organisations increased, especially on the eves of religious holidays. For instance, between 1969 and 1970 the 54 experts from this society conducted 284 lectures on scientific and atheist themes among the members of the *kolkhoz*es in the districts. In 1970 the *Znanie* society conducted 3,357 presentations on atheist themes in 85 rural clubs, 9 *domkultur*s (cultural houses) and 64 atheist classes in the province. The number of atheist lectures conducted by the *Znanie* society was shown as 313, in which 28,069 individuals participated.[85] All these measures were highlighted by the CARC commissioner as the outcome of a successful collaboration between the social assistance commissions and the *Znanie* society.

The figures indicating the progress of atheist propaganda by cultural and enlightenment organizations also dramatically increased. By 1974, about 5,279 lectures had been conducted in 128 clubs, 135 libraries and 23 mobile clubs. In 1975, it was estimated that the *Znanie* society had conducted 302 lectures on scientific-atheism themes; 310 on chemistry; 190 on astronomy and 534 on medicine. Hundreds of meetings, including question-and-answer sessions and discussions, were held with youth to implement the new Soviet rituals in each of the educational and cultural organisations.[86]

---

[83] Timur Kocaoglu, 'Islam in the Soviet Union: Atheistic Propaganda and "Unofficial" Religious Activities', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1 (1984), pp. 145-152.

[84] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, (17 February 1969), p. 12.

[85] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (20 March 1970), pp. 50-51.

[86] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 9, (12 February 1975), p. 24.

It appears that the atheist campaigns were reinvigorated in the light of each decision or decree of the congresses, plenums of the party or government at the union level. When new decrees appeared, the *obkom* and *oblispolkom* authorities ordered the *ispolkom*s of the districts and the *Znanie* society to systematically organise seminars and furnish lecturers for the population on atheist themes. Gradually, by the 1970s and 1980s, atheist propaganda even reached remote areas and *kolkhoz*es, with regular visits by team of lecturers and showing films to *kolkhoz* members. From 1970 to the late 1980, the CRA commissioners highlighted the success of atheist propaganda and the administrative measures for controlling the religious situation among the population of the region. Yet they also regularly called for an increase in propaganda to combat the remaining religious rites, to remove religious views from the minds of the Soviet peoples and to suppress the activity of some of the religious figures.

Conclusion

Over the course of almost five decades, a complex set of interactions between party state officials, believers and ordinary Soviet citizens emerged that had to go beyond the confines of the legalised but limited space for religious activity. As a result of these instructions a space was provided for informal and formal religious activity among the population, thereby enabling religious practice to be transmitted to the next generation.

The religious situation from the mid-1960s onwards was not seen to be as problematic as was the case in the 1950s when the increasing numbers of religious figures and their rivalry over conducting rites and influence among the population had worried the Soviet authorities. By the end of the 1960s, it appeared that the local party and government authorities had more or less succeeded in ensuring the compliance of the population with the legislation on religion and in spreading atheist propaganda in the region. This success specifically meant that official registration of the *khalifa*s and *domullo*s to conduct the basic religious rituals required for marriage and funerals. This success was also measured by the fact that the majority of the registered *khalifa*s were reported to have a poor knowledge of religion. They learned some excerpts of the Qur'an that were required during *janoza* (burials) and funerals.[87] In 1969 a commission was sent from the CRA office in Moscow to study the religious situation among the Ismaili population of Gorno-Badakhshan. The findings of the CRA commission from Moscow did not reveal significant

[87] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 422-424.

differences with the information usually provided in the reports of its commissioners on the religious situation in this province.[88]

By early 1980s the CRA recognized that the religious situation was out of its control in the Muslim context and was in fact managed by the numerous 'itinerant *mullo*s.' In Gorno-Badakhshan the commissioners had often criticized the local *ispolkom*s for their inadequate monitoring of the religious situation. There were many occasions in the context of Gorno-Badakhshan when local officials remained passive in the face of decisions of the central government in the field of religious policy. Nevertheless, in the period under study these criticisms never reached a point when the party and state officials in Moscow, or Dushanbe, were entirely suspicious about the activity of the local government in implementing religious policies in Gorno-Badakhshan.

The cases of local officials and religious figures negotiating their common understanding of religious views, the practice of Islam and that of the state anti-religious policy reveal how the implementation of the same rules and decrees of Soviet religious policy differed from one place to another and from time to time. It has been pointed out by Ro'i that by cooperating with religious figures in the Muslim context, the local officials thwarted the attempts of Soviet central authorities to institutionalize religious life.[89] By 1983 the authorities in Moscow were alarmed by the local officials in the Tajik SSR who were still undermining Soviet state legislation and decrees. In his report to the Unit of Propapaganda of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, the chairman of the CRA, V. A. Kuroedov, stated that the religious situation in the Tajik SSR was causing serious concern as the constitutional principles of freedom of belief were being violated. He noted that the 'activities regarding the implementation of decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party about the "Islamic factor" were not being conducted satisfactorily in the Tajik SSR.'[90] This message of the CRA about the "Islamic factor" implied a dramatic increase in religious activity, such as mosque attendance, organising illegal shrine pilgrimages, religious schools, unlawful constructions of mosques, turning *choi-khona*s

[88] See notes on Ismailism in the GBAO in a report by A. Barmenkov , the first deputy of the CRA chairman to the Unit of the Propaganda of Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR in RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 38, (22 May, 1970), pp. 16-17.

[89] *Islam in the Soviet Union,* pp. 680-681.

[90] V. A. Kuroedov to the Unit of Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR on the 'Serious Mistakes in Implementing the Principle of the Freedom of Belief and Legislation of Religious Cults in the Tajik SSR', see RGANI, f. 5, op. 89, (16 September 1983), pp. 58-63.

(tea-houses) into mosques, as well as spreading religious literature. The report criticized the local officials for having turned a blind eye to the fact that hundreds of illegal mosques were functioning in the Tajik SSR. Local officials were also blamed for having refused to register religious societies and places of worship.

Traditional structure and local realities changed the local perception and dedication to central Soviet policy. For instance, in the larger context of Central Asia, it was the connection inside the *mahalla*s (neighbourhoods) that determined the success and limits of implementing of central state policy by the local authorities.[91] There were many occasions in the context of Gorno-Badakhshan when local officials remained passive in the face of decisions of the central government in the field of religious policy. Formally, in their reports the commissioner had to stress the distinction between state officials and those defined as believers and clergy. Nevertheless, cases when local officials, party members, participated in a religious ceremony together gives doubt to consider them often as two opposed or distinct category of Soviet citizens. That seems to have led the appearance of a discrete way of assessing and ensuring the compliance of religious believers with Soviet state legislation in Gorno- Badakhshan, which seemed to satisfy the central state authorities and the local actors: officials and religious figures.

[91] See article by Vera Exnerova, 'Caught between the Muslim Community and the State: The role of the Local Uzbek Authorities in Ferghana Valley, 1950s-1980s', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1 (2006), pp. 101-112 and Sergei P. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia* (London, 1992).

Chapter 3: Religious Figures between Concession and Accommodation (1950-1985)

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the religious life that evolved around the activity of religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan. It highlights the immediate impact of the changes in Soviet religious policy on the revival of religious activity by the clergy in the 1950s, the pressures and limitations on them in the 1960s and finally their accommodation and integration into Soviet society. While the impact of these changes cannot be ignored, this chapter also seeks to demonstrate that religious figures had not always remained passive recipients of Soviet religious policy, but actively sought to negotiate and adjust their social and religious position when interacting with state officials, including the CARC commissioners. Ultimately, it was these interactions and negotiations of social and religious positions by religious figures against the agents of the state, the local officials, which defined the limits and success of Soviet religious policy in this province.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides an overview of the profiles of religious figures who emerged in the religious landscape of Gorno-Badakhshan in the decade after the Second World War. The second section explores the relationships and interactions between party bureaucrats, officials and religious figures in the light of shifts in Soviet religious policy. The third and fourth sections respectively look into the rivalry among religious figures for position and their integration into Soviet society. The fifth and sixth sections of the chapter examine the views of the religious figures about Islam and Soviet state ideology, as well as their rise as a prominent social agent within various localities.

3.1. Changing Religious Situation and the Religious Figures

In the period under study, the religious situation was marked by the absence of a religious administration and hierarchy among both Sunni and Ismaili Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan. Prior to the establishment of the Soviet government, the religious leaders in the Sunni-populated districts of this province were appointed by the representatives of the Emirate of Bukhara that had controlled the region since 1895.[1]

[1] For more on the administration of Emirate of Bukhara in present parts of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, see B. Iskandarov, *Vostochnaia Bukhara i Pamir vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Dushanbe, 1963).

Among the Ismailis the religious affairs was managed by the network of the *pir*s. In 1950, the CARC commissioner reported that 'with the class struggle against the exploiters', the collection and delivery of *zakot* to the Ismaili Imam ceased in the 1930s when the *pir*s fled from Soviet territory into Afghanistan.[2] In the past, attending communal prayers on religious festivals was reportedly compulsory and enforced by the rulers and clergy among the Sunni population, but this had become a voluntary activity by the Soviet period. A change in the religious situation was also indicated by the decrease in the numbers of people celebrating religious festivals and attending funeral rituals, for instance the ceremony of the *da'wat* among the Ismaili population of the region. The Ismaili population mainly prayed in their houses, and only gathered for communal prayers during funerals.[3]

In spite of these radical changes, religion maintained its influence through the practice of rituals. The first CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan considered some of the religious rituals, such as the slaughter of livestock for the preparation of extravagant meals, and funerals, especially at times of natural calamity, as patriarchal and feudal. Nevertheless, they were still widespread in Soviet society. Therefore, his immediate task was to urge the religious figures and community to reduce the practice of any customs that decreased productivity and the numbers of livestock in the *kolkhoze*s. Like the sacrifices, shrine pilgrimage and worship were considered expressions of fanaticism, which had been widespread in the past but were reported to be obsolescent by the 1950s. With the ban on religious teaching put in place by the Soviet government since its establishment, this phenomenon was also absent from the public sphere in this period. Despite the opening of two official centres for the Muslims of the Soviet Union, not a single cleric from Gorno-Badakhshan studied in these centres.

The relatively free milieu of religious activity that emerged in the aftermath of the Stalinist concession to believers, in turn allowed a surge in the numbers and activities of the various kinds of religious personnel throughout the country. In his first year of work in 1950, the CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Mirzobek Bodurov, provided a tentative number of 148 individuals, comprising 42 *khalifa*s and 106 *mullo*s who were conducting religious rituals among the population. Bodurov stated that this estimate of the numbers of *khalifa*s and *mullo*s was important for controlling their activities. This statement by the commissioner Bodurov indicated the beginning of the new period for the *khalifa*s, *mullo*s

[2] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (4 March 1950), p. 3.

[3] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (3 August 1950), p. 8.

and other religious personnel in this remote province.[4] This period, which lasted for four decades, placed religious figures under scrutiny by the CARC commissioners on the one hand, and the local organs of government on the other in order to ensure the compliance of the clergy with the Soviet legislation on religion.

Most of the religious figures who resumed their activity among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s were not new actors on the religious landscape, but experienced ones. Many came from the families of former *pir*s, *khalifa*s and *ishan*s. Some other religious figures were serving as assistants to the previous *pir*s. In his report in 1950s commissioner Bodurov indicated that some religious figures still had some influence among the population due to the emphasis on their descent from the families of former *pir*s and *ishan*s. However, the importance of lineage diminished with the re-registration of religious figures and institutionalisation of religious activity in the 1960s.

This stress on lineage was not the only motivation for the different kinds of religious personnel, who resumed their activity in the post-war period in this province. As in other parts of the Soviet Union, prior to being appointed official *khalifa*s or *domullo*s, some of these individuals had worked in various non-religious professions in their localities. A few even served as chairmen of the *kolkhoze*s, as well as of the *sel'sovet*s. Significant numbers had previously worked in the trade system, others as drivers, teachers and in other professions.[5] Many had been in the past teachers of religion and many more were known as *tabib*s (faith-healers) and *qoris* (reciters of the Qur'an) or *maddohkhon*s (performers of devotion religious poetry among the Ismailis.

The birthdates of these various categories of religious figures reveal that a majority of them were born between 1875 and 1900.[6] Aged fifty and above, a significant numbers of the religious figures defined as *khalifa*s, *ishan*s, *mullo*s, the *maddohkhon*s, *sufi*s and *tabib*s had received training in traditional Islamic schools i.e., *maktab*s and *madrasa*s prior to the

[4] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (28 September 1950), pp. 12-16.

[5]The personal files of the officially registered *domullo*s and *khalifa*s for each *sel'sovet* reveal their diverse, experience, working in various capacities prior to being appointed as *ispolnitel' religioznogo kul'ta* (lit. performer of religious ritual in religious society). See GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 4 for the *lichnoe delo* (personal file) of the registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s.

[6] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 6, 'The list of functioning unregistered clergy in the territory of the GBAO', (10 October 1952), pp. 30-50.

1950s.[7] In the period under study, they continued to teach secretly at the family level and some were called *mu'allimi ilmi din* (teachers of religious knowledge) as opposed to *mu'allimi Soveti* (Soviet schoolteachers).[8] The local commissioners knew the background of religious figures, as both the officials and religious figures had grown up in the same milieu, the same *kolkhoze*s and villages.

The fact that some of these various religious personnel were formally selected as *khalifa*s, *mullo-imom*s or *dommullo*s did not mean that those categorised as unregistered or *brodiachii dukhovenstvo* (itinerant clergy) had less knowledge or expertise in religious affairs. On the contrary, statistics about the level of education of the itinerant clergy reveal that in some cases they were even better trained than the registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. At times in this period, they appeared more influential and active in preaching than the formally appointed clergy. These itinerant *mullo*s also assisted and substituted for those who recited the Qur'an i.e., the *qori*s and the *imongui*s, those who recited prayers at the deathbed or during funerals and other religious occasions in the absence of registered *khalifa*s. Subsequently, however, the official *khalifa*s and *mullo*s registered between 1960s and 1980s in this province were categorised as those who had a basic familiarity with the Arabic scripts, reading prayers and conducting rites.[9] The influence of the *tabib*s and *mullo*s also prevailed among the population, especially on the occasions of sickness, as people continuously appealed to them for healing through prayers rather than taking themselves off to see the Soviet-trained medical staff. Nevertheless, the CARC commissioner pointed out to that with health care provision, the opening of new medical centres and trained expertise throughout the region, the popularity of these religious figures decreased.[10]

[7] By 1952, the commissioner provided information about the title, level of education, and residence of the various religious figures, including *khalifa*s, *mull*os, healers and the number of people they were serving in each village.

[8] Both the Soviet and religious teachers were also called *okhon*s by their students and community members, although the term *okhon* was rarely used in official Soviet publication and press informing about teachers.

[9] See Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 422- 424.

[10] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Dokladnaia zapiska', (5 August 1952), pp.71-76; For more on faith-healing and prayer among the Ismaili population of the GBAO, see Koen. D. Benjamin, *Beyond the Roof of the World* (Oxford, 2009).

In 1951, the commissioner reported that there were 174 *khalifa*s and mullos serving the 17,714 individuals defined as 'believers' in Gorno-Badakhshan.[11]

These numbers of 'believers' were neither accurate nor relevant in defining the rest of the Muslim population in this province as 'unbelievers'. First of all the definition of what constituted a believer was not clear. Was a believer someone reported to have been regularly praying or above forty years old or retired? The CARC commissioner, though, indicated that believers were those who reportedly prayed at home. But the paradox was that in the absence of a prayer house or mosque in the province, that local population had nowhere to pray except for private homes and occasionally in an open field or near a sacred place. Furthermore, the CARC commissioner identified several groups of the population in this province as the 'most fanatical believers'.

These 'fanatical believers' included the population of the villages such as: a) Qozideh, Darshai, Vrang and Zung in the district of Ishkashim; b) the villages of Suchon, Darmorakht and Porshnev in the district of Shugnan; c) the villages of Khuf and Barzud in the district of Rushan; d) the population of the village of Rawmed in the district of Bartang; and e) the whole population of the district of Roshtqal'a. In the Sunni-populated Wanj district, the populations of the villages of Wodkhud and Rokharv fell under this category of 'fanatical and dangerous believers'.[12] Why did the CARC commissioner consider the population of the aforementioned location as 'the most fanatical believers'? It appears that the population of these locations were strongly influenced by the preaching and healing activities of well-established religious figures, the *khalifa*s *okhon*s, *mullo*s and *tabib*s. In these villages the clergy also preserved huge amount of religious literature.

Regarding the economic and social position of the religious figures, Bodurov indicated that most of the *khalifa*s were law-abiding citizens and did not travel to perform religious rites outside the territory of their *kolkhoz*es. In their turn, the *kolkhoz*es provided material support, textiles and food at the funerals of its members. Some of these religious figures, for instance, encouraged the members of their *kolkhoz*es to work harder. Bodurov noted that 'the educated Muslim clergy tried to prove that they were praying to Allah to grant strength to the Soviet government.'[13] Despite stressing his initial assessment of the religious situation, Bodurov wrote to the council in Moscow that he had not received any

[11] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (8 February 1951), p. 22.

[12] Ibid., p. 23.

[13] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (8 August 1950), p. 14.

specific instructions on how to deal with the religious personnel and rituals of the Ismailis in this province. This made it difficult to regulate the activity of numerous *mullo*s and to identity those who had been formally selected by the population to conduct religious rites. In the case of receiving *khodataistva* (application) from the believers, the CARC commissioner had to refer them to the council, his senior colleague in the republic and the provincial party and government heads. The issue of appointing official *khalifa*s in the Ismaili-populated districts, and official *domullo*s in the Sunni-populated districts, became more difficult when the local government remained reluctant to do it. For instance, it was reported in the *sel'sovet* of Porshnev in the Shugnan district that four individuals voluntarily started to conduct religious rites in their respective villages after the death of a registered *khalifa*. The same situation prevailed in other places where groups of believer did not appeal to the local government to appoint new *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. In their turn the officials also remained reluctant to inform the CARC commissioner about the absence of registered clergy in some villages. Bodurov therefore requested instructions from the council and his senior colleague, the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR.[14]

Being mandated with guaranteeing legal protection to the registered religious figures, the commissioner also needed to help them in the case of administrative pressure from officials. The greatest numbers of complaints from religious figures in the early 1950s were about the problems resulting from their service as formal *khalifa*s and *mullo*s while at the same time working in the work in the *kolkhoze*s. For instance, the fiscal authorities in the districts of Rushan and Shugnan imposed a tax on the *khalifa*s for conducting essential religious rites. These *khalifa*s complained that they should not be taxed for conducting rites for which they did not receive any income, but rather on their working income in the *kolkhoz*es.[15]

This kind of situation prompted rivalry between the various religious figures, mainly the informal *mullo*s, in attracting followers. In their turn the flexible state policy towards religious believers and the demand by the masses to observe religious rites allowed various *mullo*s, *duokhon*s (those reciting prayers), *shaykh*s, *folbin*s (fortune tellers) and *ishan*s, estimated to number about 170 in 1958, to function in various parts of the province. To avoid these individuals gaining excessive influence, it was deemed necessary to involve the more formal representatives of the community, the registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s.

[14] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 2, (19 July 1958), p. 41.

[15] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 9, (20 July 1954), p. 25.

Therefore, the CARC commissioner suggested to the council and provincial authorities to proceed with registering the numbers of individuals required to conduct of religious rites among the population of the province.[16] By the end of the 1950s, the commissioner Bodurov revealed cases where a leading clergy would denounce his activity, something that was deemed a success for applying religious policy by the local party and state officials. This denunciation, however, concealed the latent rivalry between the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s. Some of these religious figures waited to seize an opportunity to collaborate with the officials, while others continued their underground religious activities. The success and failure of the clergy was therefore dependent on their relationship with the local Soviet government and party members, and the various agents defined as *aktiv*s in the reports.

Statistics provided in the reports show that there was no significant increase or decrease in the numbers of religious personnel in the years between 1950 and 1955. However, from 1957 to 1960 their numbers increased. The differences in the numbers of estimated religious figures even from one year to the next point to the kind of difficulties that the commissioner had in terms of defining who could be considered religious personnel or believer. An example of the challenge of identifying people as religious figure can be found in the statistical reports for the years 1957 and 1958. In these years the number of religious figures identified as *maddoh*s had increased.[17] The number of clergy defined as *maddoh*s was indicated mostly for the Ismaili populated districts of Shugnan, Rushan, Ishkashim, and Roshtqal'a. Presumably, *maddoh*s referred to the *maddohkhon*s (performers of panegyric poetry).[18] It should also be noted that, apart from some brief information on the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s for each village, the documents under study do not reveal much information about *duokhon*s, *shaykh*s, *maddohkhon*s and scores of other

[16] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, (16 March 1959), p. 43.

[17] There were 64 people defined by the commissioner Bodurov as *maddoh* singers. Out of these 64 only two were from the predominantly Sunni populated district of Murgab and one from the Wanj district. The rest of them were divided between the Ismaili populated districts as follows: Shugnan – 18; Rushan – 20; Roshtqal'a – 11; Ishkashim – 10; the city of Khorog – 3. For the number of different kinds of religious figures functioning in the territory of Gorno-Badakhshan by 1 January 1958, see GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, (8 January 1958), pp. 31-33.

[18] *Maddoh*: (literally 'praise'), a performance genre through which devotional poetry performed by special musical instruments. For more on this tradition, see Gabrielle Van Den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismai'ilis of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden 2004). Hay darmamad Tawakalov, *An'anai madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon* (Dushanbe, 2013); and Benjamin Koen D, *Beyond the Roof of the World* (Oxford, 2009).

religious figures. A brief summary of the themes of some of the devotional poetry recited by the *maddohkhon*s was, however, provided.

In 1958, the CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Bodurov, provided an estimate of 297 religious figures in the province. The total numbers of the believing Ismaili population was estimated to 37,274. The statistical report also provided confusing numbers for the male and female members of the *kolkhoz*es and workers in the other sectors of economy who were considered as worshippers. For instance, among the Ismailis 3,899 members of the *kolkhoze*s were estimated as actual worshippers, including 1,536 women. The number of workers identified as believers was approximately 4,521 of whom 123 were actual worshippers including 41 women. The believing Sunni population of the *oblast* was estimated to have been 14,128. Among the Sunni population, the numbers of worshippers were estimated 730, including 180 women. Of 108 workers in other fields and officials, 30 were defined as worshippers including six women, were classified as *bogomoltsi* (pilgrims).[19]

In 1959, the CARC commissioner reported that only 25 individuals were registered to conduct religious rites for the whole population of the province. This was less than what was required to be certified, 24 *khalifa*s for the Ismailis and 18 official *domullo*s in the Sunni-populated districts, where both the authority and the community reportedly remained indifferent to the registration issue. It was estimated that there were 400 religious figures functioning in the *oblast* by the beginning of 1960, of whom 47 were supposed to be registered. However, by 1961, only 35 were listed for registration and 225 were reported to have stopped their religious activity for various reasons.[20] While the report for 1960 did not point to administrative interference in the affairs of religious figures, the huge decrease suggests how the recent anti-religious campaign by the Soviet government had influenced them. In the years of the renewed anti-religious campaign under Khrushchev from 1959 to 1964, the numbers of *shaykh*s, *ishan*s, *tabibs*, *maddohkhon*s and other individuals were dramatically reduced. Those continuing their activity experienced an intensified atheist campaign and administrative pressures by the party propaganda units, lecturers, media, local officials and the State Security Committee (KGB) in the province.

[19] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, 'Informatsionnii otchiot za vtoroe polugodie 1957 goda o sostaianie religioznosti nezaregistrirovannykh musul'manskikh obshestva v predelakh GBAO', (1 January 1958), pp. 31-34.

[20] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1737, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot', (10 April 1961), pp.74-76.

This did not mean that those defined as official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s in this region were unaffected by the new anti-religious campaign. Those officially appointed clergy also remained subject to continuous surveillance and could have been tried if they violated the Soviet legislation on religion.

The registration of the official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s was prolonged and led to confusion, especially with regard to taxation, the issue that was considered one of the main measures for limiting their activity. For instance, in the 1960s there were five complaints from the Sunni *mullo*s in Qala-i Khumb district to the CARC commissioner about taxes imposed on them by the finance office in the district. These *mullo*s were not registered but had been selected to perform *janoza*s (funeral prayers). The CARC commissioner found through the *oblast* authorities that since these *mullo*s were members of the *kolkhoz* they would be exempt from additional taxes. It was revealed that in the same district, when the fiscal authorities imposed tax on the 'household of the blatant clergy', the district *ispolkom* cancelled it on the basis of information that they worked more than 85 days in the *kolkhoz.* The staff from the finance committee of the *oblispolkom* checked this information and revealed that none of these *mullo*s was working in the *kolkhoze*s. The district *ispolkom* had exempted these clerics from taxation with false certificates provided by the administration of the *kolkhoz*. The CARC commissioner pointed out that this act of the district *ispolkom* went against the decision of the *oblispolkom* of 17 of March 1961, which obliged the fiscal units in the districts to impose tax on the clergy immediately. This situation pointed to the loose control of local government over the *mullo*s, who reportedly feared that registration would make them liable to the payment of taxes.[21]

The second CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Arifov, followed the instructions of the council and reported to the *obkom, oblispolkom* and KGB office that registration had to be conducted without publicity to avoid unnecessary rumblings, and rumours among the clergy and ordinary believers. According to the instruction from the council, official religious personnel needed to be selected by groups of believers of both genders aged above 18 years, appointed by the local *ispolkom* and registered by the CARC commissioner under the *oblispolkom*. This registration would enable the officially appointed *khalifa*s and *domullo*s to prevent any illegal and itinerant *mullo* from operating in their territories i.e., the *sel'sovet*s. Registration was reportedly carried out successfully among the Ismailis and the commissioner stated that the registered clergy were interested

[21] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 16, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot', (3 March 1961), p. 12.

in obtaining material benefits and securing control over the religious situation in their territory.[22] Therefore, the commissioner Arifov called on the provincial authorities to exercise stricter control over the activity of the *mullo*s in the Sunni-populated districts. What were the reasons that registration was successful in the Ismaili-populated districts but drawn out in the Sunni-populated ones? One reason, as pointed out, was that the authorities in the Sunni-populated districts did not take the issue of registration seriously. The other reason for the delay in registration was that the itinerant clerics had a profound influence among the population who did not wish to collaborate with the local *ispolkom*s. For instance, in the Kyrgyz-speaking Murgab district, the situation was exacerbated when the itinerant *mullo*s railed against inviting the registered *mullo*s to conduct religious rituals in private houses and replaced some of them. It was not likely that the Ismaili *khalifa*s had a weaker influence among the community, but there might have been more pressure on them from the authorities. It seem to had been also the case that the authorities in the Ismaili-populated districts, including the CARC commissioner worked more easily with the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s regarding the issue of registration.

In the years of the strengthened anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964, incomplete processes such as registration prompted strict measures against religious figures but not against officials. Unlike in previous years, the CARC commissioner needed to promote stronger collaboration with the local government in order to prevent the violations of legislation by religious figures in the 1960s.[23] In Gorno-Badakhshan, the commissioner called for stricter measures to be taken against the religious figures among the Sunni community, but not against the officials who remained indifferent to the issue of registration:

> It is necessary to conduct some work among the Sunni community, in order to fit the clergy within the framework of the legislation on religious cults. There is another option, actually, it is crude, but if the clergy do not want to be officially registered to conduct rites among the believers, and the believers themselves do not want it, one must strictly prohibit any itinerant clergy from conducting illegal and unofficial activity among the believers. If we continue as we are, we will not get rid of this terrible infection of the ideology of Islam for a long time.[24]

[22] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (6 April 1962), p. 12.

[23] See Eren Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', pp. 251-252.

[24] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, (6 April 1962), p. 13.

In 1963, the number of individuals applying for registration was reduced to approximately a third with the provincial authorities only agreeing to register 35 *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. This process was completed by 1964 with 37 individuals, one for each *sel'sovet* registered as official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s.[25] This list was more or less complete apart from allowing some *khalifa*s and *domullo*s to select assistants for themselves in the remote villages. These assistants were needed to conduct rites at funerals in case the registered clergy did not arrive on time. In a case where there was a serious violation of the state legislation on religion, the registered clergy had to bear responsibility for their assistants. This new registration process was different from that previously attempted due to requirements such as a) documentation i.e., biographical details, a photograph of the *khalifa* or *domullo*, and an appeal from a religious society; and b) the stipulation to follow strict procedures for conducting the life-cycle rites; and c) the prohibition on the registered clergy involving themselves in the illegal practices of faith-healing, preaching and teaching.

The fact that religious figures collaborated with each other, however, did not prevent their jostling for influence and position, gathering supporters or interfering in each other's duties and spheres of activity. Their increasing visibility and rivalry were, therefore, not conditioned by the moderate religious policy in that period but had their roots in existing tensions between them. The itinerant *mullo*s waited for the moment to assume the position of the registered *khalifa*s and *dommullo*s. In their turn, those *khalifa*s and *domullo*s resigning from their formal positions joined the ranks of itinerant *mullo*s. This shifting of positions, and the mutual interference among the clergy in Gorno-Badakhshan, suggest that the CARC categorisation of Islamic figures as either official or unofficial was not static. From the CARC position it was pragmatic to divide the clergy into registered and unregistered in order to lessen their influence. As for the religious figures, their interference in each other's spheres of activity and the personal rivalry between them was not only motivated by their interest in becoming official religious figures. It was also an attempt to control the religious community.

3.2. Relations with Local Government

By and large the boundaries between functioning religious figures, both formal and informal or those categorised as itinerant *mullo*s, remained fluid until the re-registration process of the official clergy instituted by Arifov, the second CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan in 1963. It also appears that in the years of the moderate religious

[25] Ibid., p. 28.

policy, relations between clergy and officials were ambiguous. The increase in religious activity and religiosity alerted the Communist Party members and Soviet officials to the need for further strict surveillance and control. Due to the changing state policy towards believers, the party and state officials needed to change their previous method of attacking religious figures. It was in this confusing situation in the 1950s that the CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan needed to implement a policy that would ensure the compliance of sides, the religious figures and the officials, with the Soviet legislation on religion. The implementation of this policy in the localities depended more on the existing cultural and personal ties between clergy and officials, their views and actions, than on the general regulations and decrees confirming the believer's right to practice religion within the confines of state legislation.

The local authorities did not always follow a clear policy towards religious figures. Sometimes, as indicated above, they wrongly imposed tax on the officially registered *khalifa*s but not on the illegal *mullo*s. This in turn emboldened the itinerant *mullo*s to increase their activity. In terms of propaganda, the local authorities did not provide sufficient information on their activities to the authorities in the *oblispolkom.* This, however, did not mean that all of the local authorities were ignoring religious activity; indeed certain officials and rural *aktiv*s were struggling hard against religious rites.[26] For instance, it was reported that a chairman of a *kolkhoz* in the Ishkashim district did not allow a *khalifa* to leave his work repairing a road when the cleric was needed to lead the funeral of a fellow villager. The corpse reportedly remained for two days in the house and the relatives had to bring another *khalifa* from the nearby *kolkhoz* to conduct the *janoza*. Having received a complaint Bodurov did not hesitate to report this case as an irresponsible act by the local authorities towards religious figures and believers. A similar case was reported in the Shugnan district when a brigadier (head of a unit composed of the members of the *kolkhoz*) banned the *khalifa* from conducting funerals for members of his own *kolkhoz* on working days. The *khalifa* also complained to the commissioner that when the son of the brigadier died he allowed another person to conduct the funeral, even on working days.[27]

[26] *Aktiv, sel'skii aktiv, raiaktiv* the most active member of society, village council, district *ispolkom*s and Communist Party members.

[27] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 4, (1 January 1955), pp. 23-33.

Another case reported to the commissioner demonstrated a different reason why the local authorities forbad the *khalifa* from performing the religious rites. Mirzoqandov Sulaimonsho, a *khalifa* in the village of Barzud of the Rushan district, complained to the CARC commissioner that the *kolkhoz* management did not allow him to conduct funeral rites. As a *khalifa* Mirzoqandov was supposed to conduct the ritual of *tasbeh* on the final night of funerals. However, there were a group of itinerant clergy who interfered in the activity of this *khalifa*. Mirzoqandov therefore complained that he was an officially appointed *khalifa* and the itinerant *mullo*s had no right to interfere in his activities. The problem, however was that the chairman, the brigadier and a group of *mullo*s in this village themselves wanted to perform the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* on the final night of the funerals instead of the ritual of *tasbeh*. Mirzoqandov did not only serve as *khalifa* but also an ordinary *kolkhoz* worker. He was therefore concerned that if he did not follow the wishes of the *kolkhoz* management and perform the ritual of *tasbeh* instead of *charogh-i rawshan*, they would reduce the amount of his working hours as a member of *kolkhoz* and therefore his salary would be less.

The commissioner Bodurov noted that he forwarded this complaint to the secretary of the *obkom* party.[28] Whether Mirzoqandov had grounds for complaint or not, there is no indication that the *kolkhoz* management put pressure on him for overstepping his duties as an appointed *khalifa.* There was another reason that behind the pressure of the *kolkhoz* management on this *khalifa*, which was related to the disagreements over performing the two different kinds of funeral rites. In this case, if Mirzoqandov's complaints were well founded, the authorities used ritual and itinerant *mullo*s as tools to pressurise the official clergy rejecting their decisions. As for the *khalifa* Mirzoqandov, he subsequently appeared as a dissident and rebellious in the eyes of local authorities due to his complaints about them. This further illustrates the argument stated at the beginning of this chapter that increasing rivalry between religious figures on one hand and their relationship with officials on the other blurred the divisions between officialdom and religious figures as two opposing strata of Soviet society.

Interference by officials in the activities of religious figures took various forms and was dependent on a complex network of relations in the workplace and society. Solving work-related problems demanded that the commissioner act more as a party and local government official implementing a policy that protected the rights of religious figures as

[28] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Informatsionnii otchiot', (18 August 1953), pp. 133-134.

Soviet citizens and called upon officials not to violate the law in terms of what it allowed believers to practice. However, as was the case everywhere else in the Soviet Union, the CARC commissioners had to act within the state rules of governance and the Soviet law on religious societies.[29] He therefore often instructed the clergy to act in the way the local officials required. Thus, when religious figures complained to him about how the *kolkhoz* authorities would send them to work outside its territory at a time when they were needed to conduct rites such as funerals, Bodurov suggested solving the matter through the local government and appealing to the law. On one occasion, a group of believers from the *sel'sovet* of Qozideh (Ishkashim district) complained to Bodurov about the *sel'skii aktiv* (rural activist) who always used to send their *khalifa* to work outside the *kolkhoz*, but did not confirm his working hours. This *khalifa* complained several times to the *raiaktiv* (district activist), but he was reluctant to respond. However, Bodurov suspected that the *khalifa* might not have been working well in his *kolkhoz*, and needed to establish a good relationship with the administration. With this recommendation, he encouraged the *khalifa*, saying that if he worked well and simultaneously performed his religious duty, the officials would take this into account. Even though the commissioner did not solve this issue in favour of the *khalifa*, in his report he pointed out the fact that the believers were aware of the rights granted to them by Soviet law.[30]

These instances show that the CARC commissioner had only a limited opportunity to work within a party state bureaucratic system that remained hostile to religious activity. While collaborating with the local Communist Party and government offices he also had to explain the council's general policy to officials, namely that they should not force believers to stop practicing their religious rituals. In their turn, the clerics did not remain passive in seeking opportunities to have more privileges. This evidence of encounters between *khalifa*s and *mullos* on the one hand, and the local authorities on the other, referred to the changing position and cautious activity of religious personnel in this period. Their religious activity was closely monitored by the party and government who had numerous *aktiv*s on the ground. Nevertheless, this surveillance did not prevent their rivalry. It appears that the relatively lax religious policy in the mid-1950s boosted the morale among some religious figures into thinking that appealing to the commissioner was the only way to solve their problems. In his turn, the CARC commissioner often took an arbitrary position to deal with

[29] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 4, (18 March 1955), p. 37.

[30] Ibid., p. 39.

the disputed issues between religious figures themselves, and between them and the administration of the *kolkhoz*es, the local government, and party units.

In the decade between 1950 and 1960, many of these religious figures were denounced and stopped their activity, but many more established close ties with the local authorities in the *kolkhoz*es and turned from being religious figures into agents of local government. A number of the formally-appointed *khalifa*s even appealed for more rights and privileges. The reports for this decade indicate that mass propaganda was a significant factor in encouraging religious figures to cease their activity; however, the cases of administrative pressure on the part of the authorities forcing some leading clergy to withdraw from their position are rarely mentioned. Neither can pressure from fellow clergy be ruled out as a reason for the decrease in the numbers of *khalifa*s and *mullo*s. There were also isolated cases when religious figures deliberately compromised their position in order to free the way for their children to be brought up within the new education and career system.[31]

Similarly, some party members also felt they had to end their ties with religious figures and activity, due to pressure from the Soviet system and because of rivalry, accusations and animosity between its various members. For instance, a party official Sayyidkhusraw Shojonov (1912-1970) from the Bartang district, asked Bodurov to delist Shojonov's own father from his position of *khalifa*. The commissioner responded that he had not appointed this *khalifa*; rather it had been the group of believers from the village of Emts of the Rushan district, who had selected his father for the position. Therefore, it was up to the believers to select a *khalifa* and it was the local government that was responsible for appointing and removing him. This case revealed the kind of negotiation that both religious figures and officials needed to engage in with regard to their personal position, identity and career within the Soviet system. Well-educated officials such as Sayyidkhusraw were perhaps aware of the rights granted to believers to select clerics for conducting their religious rites. However, his official career remained at risk due to his father serving as *khalifa*.[32]

[31] A former secretary of the Communist Party Committee in the Qumsangir district of the Qurghon-Teppa, province of the Tajik SSR, for instance, mentioned how his father stopped serving as *khalifa* for the sake of his children's advancement within the Soviet system. (Interview: 6 May 2012).

[32] Subsequently Sayyidkhusraw Shojonov turned from a well-educated Soviet official and Communist Party member into a vociferous religious figure in this period. See the analysis of his letter to the Soviet leader in the subsequent section.

The career of many individuals was at stake due to rivalry and enmity among the party members and officials. Anonymous accusations seem easily to have jeopardized the lifelong career of officials if they supported religious activity, observed rites or if they were related to any religious figures. The commissioner also reported on many occasions when officials themselves observed religious rites or collaborated with the religious personnel. Accusations and the exercise of strict control on the activity of officials, religious personnel and any other active individuals were widespread in the Soviet state. In the small and less populated areas, it was therefore easy to reveal any religious activity, which would in turn put at risk the position of religious figures, as well as various other social actors in Soviet society: the party members, ordinary workers, teachers, doctors and other strata of population.

Religious personnel in Soviet Central Asia experienced unease and tense relations and were not immune from various forms of pressure and punishment despite the euphoria of the moderate policy in the aftermath of the Second World War. The reports for the early 1950s indicate that, due to administrative pressures and interference, several religious personnel were forced to migrate from their rural villages to the plains of the Tajik SSR, including the capital city. Some of these religious figures realised that migration would bring them more benefit by conducting rites, healing and offering prayer in these densely-populated areas. While this was the case to a certain extent, the fact cannot be ignored that each of these religious figures had his own particular experience of interaction with the local administration in each of the districts and villages.

Although widespread, administrative pressure also differed in nature and varied from place to place in the USSR. The Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan were not living in an isolated region but were aware of how the religious policy was implemented in other parts of the Soviet Union. In a discussion with Bodurov, one of the former *khalifa*s, Turonshoev Imronsho from the village of Tawdem of the Roshtqal'a district who had spent time in prison in Kazakhstan, compared the ban on religious activity in the Kazakh SSR with that of religious situation in Gorno-Badakhshan. He complained to the commissioner that he had not heard of or witnessed such a strict prohibition of religious activities in the Kazakh SSR where he had lived after being released from prison. According to him, the atheist struggle and propaganda were stronger in Gorno-Badakhshan. Bodurov, however, stressed the same general rules of Soviet legislation that were applied in each of the republics and *oblast*s:

> ‘Citizen Turonshoev! The Soviet government and Communist Party protect the Soviet people from every reactionary activity conducted illegally against Soviet society. As for the struggle against religion, it is not just the case in the GBAO, but the same law works throughout the whole of the country (the USSR). You must have acted against the law.’ Turonshoev then reportedly revealed that his witnesses lied to him, but he was satisfied with the Soviet government. In this way, our discussion finished and he left my office.[33]

This stress on the supremacy of Soviet legislation concerning religion, however, did not mean that in all instances the commissioner remained indifferent when believers faced administrative pressure. Bodurov, for instance, promised support to the registered clergy on the issues of taxation and to those facing pressure because their sons were working as Soviet officials. A *khalifa* complained to him that his son forbad him to conduct rites because the authorities were threatening to dismiss the son from his job. The *khalifa* was obviously in an awkward situation because he had been asked to conduct rites for a group of believers in a *kolkho*z in the Rushan district. Bodurov assured this *khalifa* of his support against the interference of the *raiaktiv* and stated that it would be inappropriate to remove the son from his post.[34]

Thus, the commissioner’s position changed from being more neutral at the beginning of his work to one of levering pressure on both groups in the light of changing situations, party decisions and decrees. This was reflected in the nature of his contradictory decisions, as on one occasion mentioned above the commissioner advised a *khalifa* to migrate with his community. A *khalifa* in the Roshtqal’a district, for instance, asked Bodurov whether he could remove his name among the people of the village who had agreed to be transferred to the capital city of Stalinobod (present Dushanbe). Bodurov advised that as a person representing the group of believers in his *kolkhoz* this *khalifa* needed to migrate with his community. In another instance, however, another *khalifa* approached the commissioner saying that he wanted to migrate but the community needed him to conduct rites. Bodurov, however, advised him to migrate even if the community needed a *khalifa*. He assured the *khalifa* that conducting rites was a voluntary job, that no one could stop him from migrating, and that the believers would themselves select a new person to replace him.[35]

---

[33] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 4, ‘Svedeniia zapisei priiomov dukhovenstva i veruiushikh za vtoroe polugodie 1954 goda po GBAO’, (1 January, 1955), p. 28.

[34] Ibid., p. 38.

[35] Ibid., p. 43.

When responding to the complaints from religious figures the commissioner had to consider his links to the community, especially to the tradition of respect and honouring the elder members of society. These two factors i. e., the commissioner's position and links to the community, proved vital for solving the various problems of the elders, which generally related to pensions, working hours and the kolkhoz management's attitude towards religious figures.

On occasions when the local authorities did not respond to complaints from the religious figures, the CARC commissioner had to intervene directly, visit the districts and the *kolkhoz*es and deal with the matter on the ground. For instance, a *khalifa* from the village of Wer of the Shugnan district, Sayyidmamadov Nurmamadsho, complained to Bodurov about a head of work brigade from the *kolkhoz*. The *khalifa* Sayyidmamadov had been working in the *kolkhoz* but the brigadier Kurbonmamadov treated him as someone who was only engaged in performing rituals. For this reason the brigadier ordered the *khalifa* to work overtime in the *kolkhoz*. When the *khalifa* raised the matter with the administration, another member of the *kolkhoz,* Alinazarov, insulted him for lodging the complaint. Upon hearing this complaint, the commissioner Bodurov had to travel to the village of Wer and resolve the issue in the meeting of the *kolkhoz.*

The commissioner believed that the appeal by religious figures to him for an explanation itself suggested their weakening influence among the believers. This enabled him not only to explain the Soviet legislation on religion to the clergy and believers while on his journey to Wer, but also to propagate state policy aimed at improving living standards and raising productivity among the members of the *kolkhoze*s. The commissioner stressed his success in ensuring the compliance of believers with legislation and reducing the influence of *dukhovenstvo* due to the 'daily care of the Communist Party and Soviet government'.[36]

3.3. Rivalry and the Denounciation of Religious Activity

The religious landscape in Tajik SSR presented a favourable context for increasing activity and rivalry between religious figures, especially those without any link to the officially functioning mosques under the jurisdiction of SADUM. In a remote, mountainous and sparsely populated region like the Gorno-Badakhshan this confusion and rivalry increased, especially during funerals, natural calamities, and religious festivals. In this context the religious figures appeared not as mere *ispolniteli* (performers) of the rites but strove for

[36] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 5, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot', (16 January 1957), p. 35.

official recognition, for authority among the believers and last, but not least, to control the emerging religious market. Similar developments in other parts of the USSR prompted the Soviet leadership to renew the anti-religious struggle to not lose grip on the rising influence of religion.[37] It was in this context of a renewed anti-religious campaign on the one hand, and increasing rivalry between religious figures on the other, that some of them ceased their religious activity. With the new phase of the anti-religious policy from 1959 to 1964, the numbers of religious figures denouncing their previous religious activity in the mass media, radio and newspapers increased.[38] In turn the instances of rivalry between the various religious figures over ritual performance put an end to their authority and career as *khalifa*s and *mullo*s.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the CARC representative for the Tajik SSR reported that dozens of religious figures had openly denounced their activity. In the early 1950s Bodurov indicated several cases such as when a leading *mullo,* Abdulloev Dawlat from the Wanj district, stopped functioning as a prayer leader. This *mullo* reportedly considered religion a temporary phenomenon and believed that according to Islamic books people would be separated from the religion in a certain period. In his view, this period corresponded to Soviet rule. However, Bodurov reported that this *mullo* also had personal reasons for making such a statement about religion and the Soviet state. The commissioner stated that in the 1930s state authorities repressed the brother of this *mullo* who was working as a *qozi*. It may be for this reason that the *mullo* stopped his religious activity fearing to not be suppressed by the state authorities.[39]

On the 4th of February 1960 an open letter from Dawlat Abdullozoda was published in the provincial newspaper *Badakhshoni Soveti*.[40] The author stated that he had studied in *madrasa*s in Bukhara prior to the establishment of the Soviet government and had served as a leading *imom* in the collective holiday prayers and funerals, practiced faith-healing,

[37] Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, p. 7.

[38] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 15, (2 May 1957), pp. 2-3.

[39] See GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot', (1 August 1953), p. 126.

[40] *Badakhshon Soveti*: (Soviet Badakhshan) a bilinguial provincial newspaper in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. It was first published with the name of *Krasnii Badakhshan* (Red Badakhshan) in Russian and *Badakhshoni Surkh* in Tajik in 1931. For a short history of the formation of this newspaper and Soviet press in the GBAO, see H. Pirumshoev and Sh. Yusufbekov, ed., *Istoriia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti*, vol. 2, *Noveishaia istoriia* (Dushanbe, 2005), pp. 93-94.

teaching and advising those individuals that he considered as *nimcha mullo*s.[41] Abdullozoda expressed his regret that he had continued religious activity while living in a Socialist society. In his view there were some individuals who regarded themselves as *olimi ilmi din,* but were not aware of modern science, medicine or economic developments.[42] These individuals deceived people with preaching, and belief in the power of healing through prayers and fasting. He then referred to several individuals acting as *nimcha-mullo*s, who in reality were making money by offering prayers during funerals, by visiting people's houses during religious festivals, and by selling *tumor*s and *tashtob*s (amulets and talismans). In addition to this, he complained that itinerant *mullo*s had been coming from the neighbouring district of Rushan to the Wanj district in order to earn money in exchange for conducting faith-ealing sessions. At the end, the author denounced religious activity and called on the authorities to ban the *nimcha-mullos* from travelling.[43]

Abdullozoda's article not only stressed the use of science and technology in atheist propaganda but also revealed the movement of the *mullo*s from one district to another. Although the general moderate religious policy in the 1950s allowed *mullo*s to travel to different areas to offer prayers and carry out faith-healing, it resulted in increased rivalry between them over territory. What is important to note about this complaint from Abdullozoda is that the itinerant *mullo*s were coming from Rushan, the Ismaili-populated district, to conduct faith-healing among the Sunni population in the Wanj district. This suggested that the forms and content of healing prayer, and its performance, were common to the Ismaili and Sunni populations, who follow different schools of interpretation in Islam.

This rivalry between religious figures over faith-healing, prayers and the religious control of territory itself, led to a call for the authorities to exercise more pressure in order to limit their activities. Therefore, the end of religious activity was caused primarily by the increasing rivalry between various *mullo*s. This reason was different from what officially cited as the impact of atheist propaganda on religious figures who ended their activity. In

[41] *Nimcha mullo*: lit. half a *mullo*, refers to those clergy who had poor religious knowledge.

[42] *Olimi din*: a religious scholar, the phrase loosely used in the context of Gorno-Badakhshan when referring to those religious figures more advanced in religious learning but not comparable to that of the *ulama* in established learning centres in the Muslim world.

[43] See Dawlat Abdullozoda, 'Maktub ba redaktsiia' (A Letter to the Editor), *Badakhshoni Soveti* 34, (2864), (February 14, 1960), p. 5.

the years of the renewed assault on religion from 1959 to 1964 the publication of such letter was an appropriate strategy for the Soviet agitators to stress the influence of the redoubled atheist propaganda campaign among believers. Paradoxically, publishing a letter on behalf of the religious figures who denounced religious activity diminished their authority among the believers, even if they were freed from pressure by the hard-line officials.

Another article in the same newspaper revealed more details of the on-going rivalry and disputes between Ismaili religious figures. Ghulomnabi Sobirov, an official *khalifa* of the *sel'sovet* of Porshnev in the Shugnan district, complained about a group of *mullo*s who were spreading religious views, especially among the young members of the *kolkhoz.*[44]

These groups consisted mainly of the relatives of former Ismaili *pir*s from Shugnan and claimed that an official *khalifa* in their village should be appointed from the *awlod* (clan) of *sayyid*s and *pir*s. Since the appointed *khalifa*, Sobirov, was not from their *awlod*, they attempted to bring in a neutral person from the city of Khorog or the district of Roshtqal'a to serve as *khalifa* in Porshnev. Sobirov further stated that the representatives of this group composed a letter on behalf of the believers with the forged signatures of individuals who were not resident in this village council. This letter was sent to the relevant authorities in the *oblast*, as a result of which a group of *dindoron* (religious individuals) held a meeting with Arifov, the CARC commissioner.

This *khalifa* further complained that in this meeting, a person incited by the group of his rival clerics even decided to physically attack him. He further explained that the basic function of this group of itinerant *mullo*s to spread religious prejudice, thereby poisoning the minds of Soviet people in order to discourage honest and industrious people from working, and to promote idle and unproductive ways of life. These activities were directed against the Communist Party's and the Soviet government's efforts to improve living conditions in the region. Sobirov noted that this was not an accident because most of those individuals spreading rumours against him 'were living at the expense of others' by preaching religion, God and the Prophet. The main point of the claim of this group was to support the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* which was based on the tales of 'lighting the road to paradise for the dead person', as the author states:

[44] See article by Ghulomnabi Sobirov, 'Charo az ijroii korhoi dini dast kashidam? (Maktubi kushod)' (Why have I withdrawn from performing religious activities? An Open Letter), *Badakhshoni Soveti* (23 March 1962), 61 (3411), p. 4.

> Under the veil of religious bigotry, these clergy wanted on one hand to extend religious propaganda on the night of *charogh-i rawshan*, and on the other to organise animal slaughter. By this action they would separate people from their productive work, even though this ritual i.e. the *da'wat* was banned by the representative of the Aga Khan in 1924, who recommended conducting the rite of *tasbeh* instead. This ritual was therefore for the benefit of the clergy, who were living at other people's expense, and it robs the family that organise the funeral. According to that prejudice, the family of the dead is obliged to offer a meal twice on the days of funeral and twice on the night of *da'wati fano*. In addition to this the family is obliged to slaughter a sheep and offer it to the *khalifa* as *pesh-charogh*.[45] In this way the expenses of the family dip to a level from which they may not recover for two to three years. The people call this action *murdatowoni* (payment for the dead). Is this what religious justice is about? I am fed up with religion and its teaching.'[46]

Sobirov also rejected the view that a *khalifa* was supposed to be from the *awlod* of *sayyid*s and *ishan*s by saying that he had witnessed how some *ishan*s exploited believers by keeping the largest share of *zakot* for themselves. In this case he may have been referring to the Ismaili *pir*s who were accused of keeping *zakot* for themselves rather than delivering it to the court of the Ismaili Imam. He further described being told 'religious fantasies' and studying under his grandfather and father who had themselves been *khalifa*s. The meaning and content of these 'stories and books' were all to deceive and exploit someone. Sobirov wrote that he had been forced to accept the role of *khalifa* under the influence of his milieu.

The article ends by stressing the waning role of religion under the influence of scientific views, progress and discoveries. Sobirov concludes that before becoming *khalifa* he had worked as an ordinary member of the *kolkhoz* and would prefer to return to his honest and decent job rather than deceiving people. Sobirov's profile in the CARC archive indicates that he had served as the official *khalifa* in the *sel'sovet* of Porshnev from 1957 and was officially registered by the CARC commissioner Arifov in 1964.[47]

---

[45] *Pesh-charogh*: lit. placing in front of the lamp, a practice of offering various goods such as meat, meal money, cloth or a piece of fabric on the occasions of *charogh-i rawshan* (the luminous lamp) ceremony on the final night of funeral. These items are placed in front of the lamp, and the *khalifa* who leads the performance collect these goods.

[46] See ending paragraph in the article by Ghulomnabi Sobirov. 'Charo az ijroi korhoi dini dast kashidam? (Maktubi kushod)' *Badakhshoni Soveti* (23 March 1962), p. 4.

[47] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 4, d. 32, 'Lichnoe delo Sobirov Ghulomnabi, grupa veruiushikh pri s/s Porshnev, Shugnanskii raion. See point 9 in his profile indicating 'Ta'rikh wa hujjathoyi az tarafi wakili nazorati dini dodashuda', (1 January 1964), No. 4', p. 4.

In his report for 1960, the CARC commissioner, Arifov noted that five articles were published in the local press that discussed scientific and atheist themes. Two of these articles were by leading religious figures who criticized the reactionary essence of religion and denounced religious activity. However, Arifov did not mention the names of the clerics and his participation in the meeting regarding the complaint about the religious figures from Porshnev. Neither did he reveal much about the rivalry between the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s and the pressure on them as depicted in these articles, but instead stressed their appearance as part of the promotion of atheist propaganda in the mass media.[48] It is possible that the propaganda experts wrote these articles in order promote the atheist campaign.

This rivalry between the various kinds of religious figures over conducting rites also made it easy for the authorities to control them. When the limited numbers of religious figures were registered in Gorno-Badakhshan, the commissioner instructed them to prevent the interference of itinerant and unregistered religious figures, and limit their activity.[49] While a Sunni *mullo* like Dawlat Abdulloev (Abdullozoda) stands out because of his background in formal religious education, it cannot be said that most of those considered itinerant *mullo*s or *tabib*s had lower levels of education than those selected for the position of official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. In fact, by the mid-1960s and 1970s, the reports show that most of the Ismaili *khalifa*s in this *oblast* had a basic knowledge of religion and were able to read prayers and conduct rites. This description of the level of religious knowledge of the official *khalifa*s and *mullo*s seems to have served the interest of the local authorities by showing the supposed weakening influence of religion in the society.

The situation with the official *imom-khatib*s and other clergy serving in the 17 officially registered mosques in the Tajik SSR was different because most of them were students of the Mir Arab *madrasa* in Bukhara. The appeal to open a mosque and register was more difficult and complex than that of registering religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan and other parts of the Soviet Union where mosques or prayer rooms did not exist. The reports to the CARC central office from its commissioners in the Tajik SSR for these years provide a confusing estimate of the number of mosques, varying between 26 and 34. It was

[48] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, 'Informatsii o sostoianii naseleniia i provedennykh meropriiatii po usileniiu kontrolia za sobliudeniem zakonodatel'stva o kul'takh po Gorno Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti za 1962 god', (7 February 1963), p. 27.

[49] See *Islam in the Soviet Union,* pp. 216-217.

only by 1963 that their number became clear when eighteen mosques with 62 ‘servants of cults’ were officially registered.[50] These registered mosques and their staff represented a tiny part of the religious figures in the Muslim-populated areas of the former Soviet Union. The former Tajik SSR contained one of the largest numbers of religious figures whose activity fell outside the registered mosques. Figures suggest that their numbers rose from 3,500 at the end of 1949 to 4,000 in the early 1960s, and then decreased to 1,000 after being re-checked in 1964; the possible reasons for this change are somewhat confusing.[51]

From the 1940s to the end of the 1950s, various categories of clergy dominated the religious landscape in Gorno-Badakhshan. None of these clergy, even those officially selected as *mullo-imom*s or *domullo*s among the Sunni population in this *oblast*, had any contact with the SADUM office i.e., the *qoziyot* in the Tajik SSR. The CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR pointed out the absence of a central religious office and stated that the Ismaili clergy, in accordance with their belief, did not recognize the SADUM. Thus each *khalifa* acted independently in conducting religious rites.[52] Nevertheless, in the context of Soviet anti-religious policy, this autonomy of a section of the clergy, i.e., the Ismaili *khalifa*s; was limited to conducting the requisite religious and life-cycle rites. In reality, even in the absence of any centralised religious leadership, the *khalifas* were subject to control and appointment by the local *ispolkom*s. The commissioner therefore had to receive documents on the *khalifa*s from the *ispolkom*s, which after considering the *khodataistva* (application) submitted by groups of believers would appoint *khalifa*s.[53] In the past, the *khalifa*s acted as the deputies of the *pir*s in the religious hierarchy of the Ismaili *tariqa* headed by the Ismaili Imam. In the period under study, the *khalifa*s were selected, appointed and registered in the new triangulated and secular system of control that involved the community in the *kolkho*zes and *sel'sovet*s, the local *ispolkom*s, and the commissioners.

In the 1960 the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR suggested to the council in Moscow about opening a religious centre for the Ismailis, headed by a senior *khalifa*. The

[50] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1739, ‘Spravka o nekotorykh faktakh proiavlenii religioznosti v respubliki po sostoianie na oktiab'ria 1963 goda’, (22 October 1963), pp. 97-103.

[51] See *Islam in the Soviet Union,* p. 333.

[52] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1737, Report by the republican commissioner in the Tajik SSR to Puzin, the CARC chairman, on religious situation for 1960 in this republic, (21 February 1961), p. 23.

[53] GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 153, ‘Spravka ob Ismailitskoi sekte na Pamire’, (10 July 1968), p. 98.

commissioner was of the opinion that this would help prevent violations of religious legislation by the various clerics.[54] The CARC office in Moscow and in the union republics had pushed for more autonomy for the spiritual directorates in the Muslim-populated republics of the USSR. This enabled the spiritual directorates, including SADUM to extend its control over the registered religious figures and to use them for the Soviet mission of propaganda, preaching and promoting friendship abroad.[55] Considering this support provided to the SADUM-supervised clergy, the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR suggested using the Ismaili clergy for propaganda in a similar role to that of SADUM in the Soviet international mission.

This suggestion was proposed due to the presence of Ismailis in a number of foreign countries. Had the proposal been put into action, this would have put the Ismaili clergy in the Soviet Union in contact with their fellow-believers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and East Africa. Inside the Tajik SSR, Ismaili religious personnel would have had a centralised office and management which could have made it easier for them to be accommodated within the Soviet bureaucratic system. The idea of using Ismailis for the Soviet international mission was also implied in a letter of a former party official who turned into *khalifa* from the village of Padrud in the district of Rushan, Sayyidkhusraw Shojonov. It was reported that Sayyidkhusraw initially intended to send his letter to the Soviet leader Khrushchev in Moscow. Sayyidkhusraw's letter states:

> In the name of Merciful God! Greetings to you! Comrade N. S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After sending you greetings on behalf of the *khalifas* and Ismailis of the GBAO (Pamir), which is also considered the roof of the world, I appeal to you, the supreme head of the Soviet state, and to all the countries of the world with affection and hope. I hope you overlook the shortcomings of this appeal sent to you, and deliver this to all those who consider themselves Ismaili Muslims and faithful. 'There is One God and Muhammad is His Prophet'.
>
> I appeal to the Ismaili faithful of all countries to unite and listen to the statements of the great Communist Party. Let the state, which leads all people of the globe on the way to the new world of Communist society, develop and strengthen. All the noble and best qualities of the Ismaili faith are embodied in the teachings of the programme of the Communist Party and the great Soviet state. Hence, the truth is on the side of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Communist Party is a powerful weapon for the Ismaili faith. Through this mighty weapon we will achieve our aim *insho*

[54] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1737, 'Report by the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR to Puzin, on the religious situation for 1960 in Tajikistan', (21 February 1961), p. 23.

[55] See 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Soviet Union, 1943-1991', p. 2.

> *alloh* (if God wishes)… I am one of the people of the Soviet Union and the slave of *Mawlono*, (the Lord), *Zhivoi Bog* who is the only king of the world and afterlife. [56] I invite all people of the world to walk in the unique path of the Communist Party and hope that they will achieve their aims, because the Communist party will be a powerful weapon for the Muslim world.[57]

At the end of this letter it was noted that the government and party authorities had been informed in detail about Sayyidkhusraw's message. However, it seems that this suggestion was considered neither by the council nor by the local party and state officials, as there was no response to it. Sayyidkhusraw become a *khalifa* after the death of his father Farukhov Shojon.[58] Coming from a family of *sayyid*s and former Ismaili *pir*s, Shojon himself studied

---

[56] The world Mawlana is also referred to as *Zhivoi Bog'* (from Russian Living God) in this extract from the letter by Sayyidkhusraw

[57] See GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1737, Extracts from this message in the report by Ahmedov to Puzin, 'O sostoianie religioznosti naseleniia, deiatel'nosti obshchin i dukhovenstva po Tadzhikskoi SSR za 1960 god', (21 February 1961), pp. 24-25.

[58] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 14, 'Informatsionnie otchioti i dokladnye zapiski po voprosam religioznogo kul'ta, 1956', Notes on commissioner Bodurov's discussion with Shojonov Sayyidkhusraw on, (6 May 1956), p. 15. Apart from these references there is no information in the archives about Sayidkhusraw and his background. However, according to my interviews with his son and daughter, Sayyidkhusraw emerged as one of the most interesting religious figures at that time and apparently suffered for his religious commitments. Sayyidkhusraw was one of the few individuals from this region selected to study, first in Tashkent and then in Leningrad, from 1932 to 1937. Upon his return he worked as educational instructor in the Tawildara district. From there he was transferred to the Bartang district where he worked as an education instructor. Sayyidkhusraw's son and daughter mentioned that their father had been promoted to the position of the first secretary of the Communist Party Committee in the Bartang district. However, he was not appointed because his father Shojon was serving at that time as a *khalifa*. Although neither the daughter nor son of Sayyidkhusraw knew about the story of their father's complaint to the commissioner, it may be the case that on that occasion Sayidkhusraw reported to the CARC commissioner in GBAO, Bodurov to remove his from the position of the formal *khalifa*. Sayyidkhusraw was not appointed to that or any other higher party or local government position, but worked as the school headmaster in his village and became a *khalifa* after the death of his father. His children also said that their father continuously preached about religion and used to invite *maddohkhon*s and other religious figures into his house for performance and discussion. For this activity he was often called to the local party, *ispolkom* or district KGB office to proffer an explanation. (Interview with Khusrawova Bibijon (b. 1951) and Shojonov Rahmat (b. 1954), (Khorog, 5 May 2012). For Sayyidkhusraw's brief biography, see also Mamadali Bakhtiyorov, *Ta'rikhi Rushon* (Dushanbe, 2013), p. 407. In his ethnographic diary on the Pamir, the Russian scholar, Ivan Mikhailovich Steblin-Kamenskii writes about his meeting with Sayyidkhusraw and their discussions on religion. Sayyidkhusraw told him of his study in Leningrad, his work as Soviet educator and how he later repented and became a *khalifa* in his old age. He explained this with the expression "fikram digargun shud" (my ideas have changed). In this

in the traditional *maktab* prior to the establishment of Soviet government in Gorno-Badakhshan. He served as the *khalifa* for the villages of Yemts Bagu and Padrud in the Bartang district from 1936 until his death around 1956. At the invitation of a group of believers this *khalifa* also conducted funeral rites for the followers of the *tasbeh* ritual.[59] According to the information provided by the former chairman of the Committee of Religious Affairs in Gorno-Badakhshan, the provincial officials could not reveal to the central party authorities in Moscow any information about the involvement of Soviet *intelligentsia* such as Sayyidkhusraw, in religious activity. If the republican or central authorities in Moscow had found out about this case, the provincial and district party secretaries would have been chastised for losing control over the religious situation, failing to implement atheist propaganda and allowing a well-educated Soviet cadre to turn into a vociferous religious figure.[60]

3.4. Adaptation Strategies and Integration

By the mid-1960s, reports sent to the central government by the local authorities in Gorno-Badakhshan stated that most *khalifa*s were working as ordinary members of the *kolkhoze*s, which enabled them to be better informed about the thoughts and views of the believers in their community. The commissioner Arifov, also indicated that the *khalifa*s could not earn sufficient income from conducting rites and were therefore involved in other works that were deemed 'socially beneficial'.[61] This portrait of the official *khalifa*s was important for two main reasons, firstly to show that the influence of religious figures in Soviet society was limited and secondly to indicate their level of integration into the Soviet order. What was not novel about this portrait of the religious situation in this province was that official

---

discussion Sayyidkhusraw stated that the CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan had been replaced by the new one who was not a native of the province. See diary by I. M. Steblin-Kamenskii, *Vakhan rannim letom, Pamirskii dnevnik* (Leningrad, 1976), pp. 22-23. Presumably, Sayiddkhusraw referred to the replacement of Shohyoqub Naimov (1909-1988) native of Gorno-Badakhshan and the CRA commissioner from 1968 to 1976. Naimov was succeeded by Nishon Hamroev (1922-1991), originally from Bukhara (Uzbekistan), who served as the CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan from 1976 to 1986.

[59] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Informatsionniy otchet za III kvartal', (1 September 1953), p. 140.

[60] Interview with researcher and journalist Sherzodshoev Shohzodamuhammadsho, who has served as the Chairman of the Committee for Religious Affairs in Gorno-Badakhshan in the post-Soviet period from 1998 to 2000. (Khorog, 6 May 2012).

[61] For a summary of CARC reports on the activities of the *khalifa* and generally of the Ismailis, see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 422-424.

*khalifa*s and *domullo*s from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s had grown up in the Soviet period and were familiar with the *kolkhoz*, and later *sovkhoz* order in their localities.

More importantly, in this statement about the *khalifa*s the local authorities of the province assured Moscow and Dushanbe that the religious figures were no longer a powerful and influential religious group to be reckoned with. The latter generation of *khalifa*s were also not seen as disloyal or as violators of the state legislation on religion, but appeared to collaborate with the local organs. For some individuals it was the economic consideration that prompted them to learn the requisite skills for conducting prayer, faith-healing and as *maddohkhon*s among the Ismailis.[62] A few individuals later stopped serving as official religious figures due to an improvement in their household economy.[63] This led the CRA commissioners to highlight how an improved lifestyle motivated many religious figures to denounce their earlier religious activity. Paradoxically, improved living standards enabled the community members to offer greater revenue to the religious figures.[64] The offer of more revenue in money and kind enabled the registered *khalifa*s, *domullo*s and the unregistered itinerant *mullo*s to become relatively more prosperous than the ordinary *kolkhoz* members. The improved economic situation also suggests that the informal religious market did not disappear or shrink but thrived instead.

The reports by the CRA commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan reveal that by the 1970s and into 1980s, officially registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s in the Gorno-Badakhshan were relatively well-established individuals in comparison to ordinary members of the *kolkhoze*s

[62] Interview with the former *khalifa* of the *sel'sovet* of Porshnev who has served as *khalifa* for 24 years (Porshnev, 2 November 2010).

[63] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d.7, (29 January 1970), p. 31.

[64] For more on the analysis of instances of decrease and increase of revenues and payment in different Muslim-populated areas of Soviet Union, see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 270-279.

and other workers in their community.[65] It appears that religious activity improved the clergy's household economy, even in the context of continuous monitoring and ideological pressure. The clergy's economic well-being therefore was not always related to their good relations or ties with local party state officials. It was more related to religious needs such as conducting the rites of *nikoh,* prayers, and funerals for the Muslim community including the family of the officials.

The example that someone could serve as chairman of a *kolkhoz,* be a respected member of the Communist Party and a local official, and then turn into a religious leader, also indicates the flexibility and a degree of social mobility in Soviet society, despite its apparent hostility to religious views, practices and figures. Evidence such as this example suggests that there was far greater complexity and negotiation in Soviet society than that suggested by earlier essentialist approaches and general interpretations. These interpretations sharply divided Soviet society into traditional and religious-sacred on the one hand and modern-secular on the other, and assumed that religious leaders were not only ideologically hostile to the secular atheist sphere but also socially separated from it.[66]

3.5. Soviet State and Islam in the View of the Clergy

The CARC commissioners often described the majority of the religious figures as people who were politically loyal and full of praise for the Soviet state. Nevertheless, they also stressed that the post-war generation of religious figures could not be considered to be progressive Soviet citizens, but rather individuals playing a 'double game' in order to raise their authority among the people. Bodurov, recorded examples of their sayings such as

[65] The registered and itinerant *mullo*s had both received payment for performing *namozi janoza* (funeral prayer) among the Sunnis and the *khalifa*s from performing the *charogh-i rawshan* at the funerals, as well as from conducting *nikoh*. The payment they received varied in each district and the commissioners did not provide accurate estimate of the income earned by the registered *mullo*s and *khalifa*s in each of the districts of the province. The differences in payments received by registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s from the believers was noted for instance in the districts of Murgab and Rushan. In the Murgab district, believers paid 30 to 40 roubles for *namozi janoza* to the official *domullo*s and in the Rushan district they paid 5 roubles for performing the *charogh-i rawshan* to *khalifa*s. For the *nikoh* believers paid 5 roubles to the clergy in the Murgab district and in Rushan 2-3 rubles. See GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 19, (14 February 1967). The highest payment received from believers at the funeral was 70 roubles.

[66] For an analysis of the use of the concepts of traditionalism and religion, modernisation and secularism, as well as criticism of the Soviet and Western conceptualisation and representing of Islam in the Soviet Union, see Mark Saroyan, 'Rethinking Islam in the Soviet Union', in Susan Gross Solomon, ed., *Beyond Sovietology: Essays in Politcs and History* (New York, 1993), pp. 23-52.

'God was on the side of the government which was *ra'iyiat-parwar* (taking care of the people) and that 'signs of the coming of the Soviet state are to be found in the religious books'. This commissioner then stated that the religious figures interpreted the establishment of the Soviet government as the kind of just rule that would prevail at the end of the world. The struggle by the imperialist powers against the Soviet state was interpreted in terms of the conflict engendered by the evil angel, Satan, and described in the holy books.

According to Bodurov, the majority of the population of Gorno-Badakhshan were unaware of these religious teachings and views, but blindly followed the 'prejudicial ideas and fanatical rituals' that were spread by the *mullo*s and *khalifa*s through secret discussions and preaching. The commissioner Bodurov often reported on the cases of preaching and religious gatherings, especially in the 1950s. For instance, he noted how, on one occasion, a leading *ishan* had visited Ismaili families in Khorog and collected about 1000 roubles by showing them a photo of the Aga Khan (the Ismaili Imam). The commissioner considered this *ishan* a 'dualist', and noted that some people rejected the ideas of this cleric and considered him mad.[67] Despite this criticism, however, Bodurov as the CARC commissioner could not take a harsh line against religious figures, but had to promote the legalised religious activity in this period. Like many of his colleagues in the former Soviet Union, he represented the 'moderate line' of the Communist party bureaucrats.[68] It should be noted though that the position and attitudes of the Soviet officials and bureaucrats were not always the same but changed under the influence of the milieu and community where they lived. This is how the commissioner K. Dawlatshoev described the preaching activities and views of the Muslim clergy about religion and Soviet state:

> Some registered and unregistered clergy preach dubious alternative tendencies. They are telling believers that the Islam and the Communist Party ideology both have the same goals. Many believers also make modernist propaganda in a similar way. They say that the achievements of the state in the field of science were taken from the religious books. For example, they say that: 'it was mentioned in our Islamic books that in the future the life of the people will be improved and the distant roads would be shorter. The Soviet regime was given to us by God; the doctors were also given to us by God, and therefore we need to be treated by them.' As a result of these conversations the clergy influence their surroundings, and not just older believers, but even some youth and children. The majority of the population in the *oblast* have

[67] GA GBAO f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, Report by Bodurov to Hamidov, (10 April 1951), pp. 31-35.

[68] See Eren Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', p. 75.

become atheists, but there are still some 'backward people' who believe in the tradition of their grandfathers and fathers. Atheist propaganda among them was not conducted sufficiently by the party, Komsomol and *profsoiuz* (trade union associations).[69]

In October 1969 a commission from the CRA headed by the T. S. Saidbaev, and the commissioner for the Tajik SSR, Yuldoshev, visited several districts in Gorno-Badakhshan to assess the religious situation. According to their observations, the Ismaili *khalifa*s appeared loyal to the Soviet socialist order and did not interfere in the lifestyle chosen by the youth. Moreover, the Ismaili *khalifa*s spoke to the members of the CRA commission of the common aims of Ismailism and Communism. In the observation of this commission, a *khalifa* mainly influenced believers during funerals, when he remained in the house of the deceased for 2-3 days to meet all of the visitors, recite prayers and lead controlled religious propaganda.[70]

The registered religious figures sought to consolidate their authority and role among the community. In their discussions with the commissioners they also engaged in debating the role of religion and state, noting the values common to both religion (Islam) and the Soviet state policy, and interpreting the signs of change seen in the Soviet period according to the prophesies of the holy books. Analysing the discourse of SADUM's representatives, Mark Saroyan states that the Muslim clergy attempted to subvert the Soviet interpretation of Islam, which considered it as anti-social and anti-progressive.[71] The Muslim clergy stressed the shared progressive values found both in Islam and Socialism. These views of SADUM's clergy were regularly published in its journal and expressed in speeches by *imom-khatib*s in registered mosques across Central Asia, as well as in accounts given by Soviet Muslim delegations during on visits abroad.[72] Unlike the SADUM's official clergy, the registered *khalifa*s in Gorno-Badakhshan had no organisation or media in which they could publicly reflect on differences or similarities between the values of Islam and Soviet socialism or the ideology of Communism. The views of the Ismaili religious figures from

[69] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 19, (14 February 1968), p. 11.

[70] RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 38, (22 May 1970), p. 18.

[71] See Mark Saroyan, 'The Islamic Clergy and Community in the Soviet Union', in Edward W Walker ed., *Minorities, Mullahs and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 51-65.

[72] For more on these speeches and articles, see the journal of *Muslims of the Soviet East* published from 1968 onwards in Russian, English, Arabic and later Dari.

Gorno-Badakhshan were therefore expressed in a rather brief and sporadic way.[73] Although SADUM condemned some of practices of the Muslim community, the registered religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan province remained almost silent about the veneration of saints, the visitation of the various *ostons* (sacred places) and *mazor*s (shrines) that were scattered throughout the province.

3.6. Social Role of the Religious Figures

Once registered and recognised, the official *khalifa*s and *mullo*s seem to have understood their role not merely as performers of religious rites but also as active social figures in their *kolkhozes.* Inside the *kolkhoze*s these registered figures were therefore not ordinary members, but informal authorities, leaders who could mobilise people for collective work such as cleaning the irrigation channels in the spring, cultivating land, mowing grass, harvesting or constructing roads to the pastures. Some displayed their loyalty to the government and strengthened their position and authority among their co-villagers and communities, thereby gaining the respect of the local authorities through actively participating in collective work. Cases were reported when, in addition to conducting ceremonies, *khalifa*s and *mullo*s had expertise in local know-how, for instance animal husbandry and gardening, as craftsmen and faith-healers.[74] Although these skills were inherited through traditions of learning under a *usto* (master), mostly in a family milieu or in a limited circle, the existing classical Islamic literature often served as a manual, especially for healing, astrology, identifying the appropriate *soat* (hour) for an event according to *nujum* (traditional astrology), which was widely used for weddings, building new houses, embarking on travel or initiating new jobs.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the CRA commissioners reported on instances where religious figures fell into dispute with local authorities. In these disputes with the authorities some clergy stressed their important role in conducting religious rites and showed that they were aware of the constitutional rights granted to them by the Soviet state. As revealed by the examples of the Soviet-educated *khalifa* Sayyidkhusraw, the

[73] The views of the *dukhovenstvo* about the Soviet state and Islam were recorded when they were interviewed by the *upolnomochennye.* The CRA reports for the early 1980s indicate that some of Ismaili *khalifa*s had been interviewed on radio. However, much of the content of these broadcasts was not presented in the reports under study.

[74] For instance, the profiles of official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s indicate not only their various work positions but also their skills, and the state awards that they had received. See examples of the biographies of the registered religious figures. GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, (20 February 1980), pp. 1-22.

debates between *khalifa* Mirzoqandov Sulaimonsho and the CRA commissioner Nayimov Shohyoqub, and the views expressed by the *khalifa* Sobirov Ghulomnabi, these individuals attempted to promote the role of the official *khalifa*s.

Referring to this evidence, the *commissioner* Nayimov concluded that the activity of the *khalifa*s and their method of influencing the population had not been studied in-depth to date; especially now they were regularly visiting the houses of the believers to discuss religious topics, although the content of such discussions remained unknown. The CRA commission visiting the region from Moscow reported that in one instance in the village of Yapshorv in the district of Rushan, after criticism of the work of a *kolkhoz* by the chairman of the *ispolkom*, the *khalifa* suggested that the *kolkhoze*s be liquidated.[75] Examples like these suggest the growing role of the religious figures, in this case *khalifa*s, as an informal authority and community leader in a remote rural area in the USSR.

Religious figures were empowered and had more prestige to speak in the *kolkhoz* meetings on behalf of the members, a status related to the respect accorded them by the rest of population. This kind of authority, informal power and officially acknowledged status, especially as the *khalifa*s could mobilise people even for collective work on *subtonics* (community workday) made them reliable collaborators and partners with the administration of the *kolkhoz*es and the *sel'sovet*s. However, this was not always to be the case because, with the gradual development of living standards, demand and competition for the allocation of resources within the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoze*s (state owned farms) also increased.

Like each member of the collective and state farms, the religious figures also had their personal reasons for either agreeing or disagreeing with the decisions of the directors or chairmen of state and collective farms about resource-distribution, employment and members' wages. They had the right to express their views, and freely approve or disapprove the decisions of the local officials on the ground. In this case, *khalifa*s and other religious figures did not remain an isolated social stratum but were active members of the working collective in addition to their informal authority as elders and official clergy. It seemed to have been on the basis of three amalgamated sources of authority and power, i.e., as respected elder figures, as head of a relatively well-established household in the *kolkhoz* and as an official religious figure, that emboldened them to raise various issues with the authorities.

[75] RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 38, (22 May 1970), p. 19.

The case of the *khalifa* Mirzoqandov Sulaimonsho is one of several examples of *khalifa*s in continuous dispute with the *kolkhoz*, the local *ispolkom* and even the commissioner, not only on the issues of employment and resource distribution but also the practice of religion. The *khalifa* Mirzoqandov Sulaymonsho from the village of Derzud in Rushan district reportedly spoke out against the heads of the *kolkhoz* and *sel'sovet* several times. His disputes with local officials, as well as with the CRA commissioner, reached a climax in a pre-election meeting with the candidate for deputy of the Supreme Council for Nationalities of the USSR, Guljahon Bobosodiqova. In this meeting he raised the issue that the *kolkhoz* had rejected his demand for allocating land to a group of families, requesting the opening of a club and shop in his village and the provision of woollen and silk clothes for women.

All of these demands and complaints according to the local officials were baseless, as the *kolkhoz* could not allocate arable land for house construction, and the shop and club could not be opened as the village was close to the district centre. The women who were present in this meeting were wearing woollen and silk cloth, therefore the authorities considered this demand to be unjustified. The other demand made by this *khalifa* was about reopening the former *jamo'at-khona* (prayer-house) in his village.[76] Subsequently the *khalifa* was invited to a meeting with the CRA commissioner and the chairman of the *ispolkom*. The commissioner Nayimov recorded a detailed transcript of this meeting with Mirzoqandov, stating that the *khalifa* considered himself knowledgeable about legislation on religion. For this reason the commissioner Nayimov engaged in debate with this *khalifa* by questioning him about the issues he raised:

> Nayimov: Were there Ismaili mosques in the Pamir region prior to the October Revolution?
>
> Mirzoqandov: Yes, we Ismailis had mosques. With the instruction from the *Mawlono*, the Aga Khan, in 1922 and with his message Hoji Sabzali Mashnari changed our mosques into *jamo'at-khona*. These *jamo'at-khona*s existed till 1937, as I remember myself that we with our *mullo*s would meet for prayer there each morning and evening. However, in the period of class struggle and the cult of personality these were destroyed and closed.
>
> Nayimov: Suppose that the government will allow you to build a *jamo'at-khona*. By which means and with what materials are you going to build it? Where will you obtain construction materials and guidance for technical maintenance?
>
> Mirzoqandov: We will gather one beam from each of the *dindoron* (religious person) to cover the roof of the building; the wall can be laid through collective work. The rest of the required materials

[76] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (12 June 1970), p. 40.

for construction will be collected from the believers in our village. As for the technical maintenance the *kolkhoz* should support us.

Nayimov: Is this your personal initiative to build a prayer room in the village of Derzud and Barzud or is it demanded by the believers?

Mirzoqandov: I am an *ispolnitel*' (performer) of religious rites in the Ismaili sect. In other words as a *khalifa*, I am authorised to represent the believers in these two villages. I myself raised the question of building mosques, so that all of the Ismaili believers every day in the morning and evening, especially during religious festivals should be able to gather for collective prayer. We should obey the *farmon* of our Imam of the Time Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan. He sent this *farmon* to us from India through Hoji Sabzali Mashnari (missionary)

Nayimov: This meant the missionary Sabziali banned the teachings of Sayyid Nosir Khisraw.[77]

Mirzoqandov: We Ismailis should carry out the latest instructions of our Imam of the Time, which he sent to us through Mashnari Sabzali.

Nayimov: Suppose you have a prayer house. If during the performance of the Ismaili prayer of *Pir-i Shoh*, a Sunni Muslim entered the prayer house, how would you react to it?

Mirzoqandov: Since our Ismaili teachings and prayers are regarded as secret from the Sunnis, we would request him to leave our prayer room. We would not allow him to enter.

Nayimov: Has anyone from the local authorities ever interfered during your performance of funeral rites for the deceased or other rituals and customs?

Mirzoqandov: No one has ever interfered.

Nayimov: Are you demanding that the 17 farmers should be provided a separate plot from the collective resource. According to the act of the Soviet legislation specialists of the *sel'lkhozarteli* (agricultural cooperative) should deal with the individual use of *priusadebnyi* (plots of land adjoining one's house).

Why do you think that the collective farm and the local government do not care about improving the living conditions of farmers? Do you not think that you are interfering in the affairs of the local government and the village council?

Mirzoqandov: As *khalifa* I put forward suggestions and engage with religious matters among the believers. To raise the issue of constructing a *jamo'at-khona* in fact I have a *registratsionnyi* (certificate of registration) as a *khalifa* that gives me the right to take care of the believers, citizens. Also, as a member of the collective farm, I attended its meeting and spoke about the ways of improving the living conditions of farmers, and the allocation of land for the common use by all. I

[77] Refers to the ceremony of *da'wat* during the funeral ceremony also known among the Ismailis of Central Asia as the *da'wat-i Nosiri Khusraw* (summon of Nasir Khusraw).

also pointed out the difficulties of engaging the farmers in social labour. This right and freedom of speech are granted to me by the Constitution of the USSR.[78]

At the end of this meeting the chairman of the district explained to the *khalifa* that the Ismaili believers did not need a mosque and that the local Soviet government could not force the believers to build a mosque with their own means. Based on this meeting and discussions, the CRA commissioner suggested that such a *khalifa* did not have authority among the believers and the rest of the population, who considered him *dewona* (mad). It appears that Mirzoqandov provided sound and appropriate replies to Nayimov's questions and justified his answers with appropriate examples. In this question-and-answer debate Mirzoqandov emerges as a *khalifa* standing up for his rights and demands, boldly challenging the local authorities, and fully aware of the relevant legislation.[79] Mirzoqandov's case reveals the tension between a *khalifa*, acting as an ordinary *kolkhoz* member with the local leadership on the ground, and his position as a religious leader allowing him to speak for a group of believers, being aware of the rights that were formally declared for believers, but that in practice were not implemented.

What the debate also revealed was that Mirzoqandov represented the group of believers who practiced a ritual of *tasbeh.* Mirzoqandov was also reportedly blamed for having considered himself superior to the *kolkhoz* management, completely ignoring the chairwoman of the *kolkhoz*, and stating that it would be inappropriate for clergy to discuss issues related to religion with women. His demand for the timely payment of wages to the members of the *kolkhoz* and the provision of high-quality fabrics for women was viewed differently by the authorities. They blamed the *khalifa* for making a show of taking care of the workers, but in reality undermining the authority of the *kolkhoz* management and village council and trying to influence the youth. Mirzoqandov was also blamed by the commissioner for having created animosity between Sunnis and Ismailis, strengthened prejudice through his preaching and created an unhealthy mood and disagreement among the population of this village. Although Mirzoqandov resisted this interpretation,

[78] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (12 June 1970), pp. 40-42.

[79] Nayimov Shohyoqub was from the village of Andarob of the Ishkashim district where neither the Panjabhai movement nor its teaching succeeded in replacing the existing rituals among the Ismailis. It seems that Nayimov belonged to the group of Ismailis who practiced the rite of *charogh-i rawshan*. It may have been for this reason that he questioned the *khalifa* Mirzoqandov Sulaymonsho, who represented the group of the Ismailis in the village of Derzud who practiced the rite of *tasbeh.* The debate between the commissioner and the *khalifa* therefore reflects in the existing dispute among the Ismailis over conducting religious rites.

considering himself right in all aspects, the commissioner noted that the *khalifa* realised the errors of his ways. Mirzoqandov accused the district party apparatchiks of not listening to him and ignoring him, treating him as an enemy, and therefore he complained to the provincial party authorities. After this meeting and debate, the district party committee and *ispolkom* considered replacing Mirzoqandov with a more 'progressive *khalifa*' which the CRA commissioner requested.[80]

Conclusion

Over more than four decades, several developments led the religious figures of the province to appear loyal to the Soviet state and to integrate themselves into a secular society by stressing the common views of their religious teaching and Soviet ideology. At the same time, evidence from their activity as presented in this chapter indicates their attempt to have a distinct religious role and authority among the Soviet Muslim community. The role and activity of religious figures in the period under study can be explained within the framework of continuity and change in religious life. The first group of clergy received their first religious education and experience of serving community prior to the establishment of Soviet government. They had also survived the years of repression in the 1930s, witnessed the state concessions, and revived their activity. The second generation were however, born during the years of the early Soviet era and had no chance to serve as religious figures prior to the 1950s.

Continuity in the activity of religious figures at this period was explained by the fact that they remained as religious figures, conducting rituals among the community and representing a category defined as *dukhovensto* despite having limited authority, power and status. Changes in their social and religious activities were more profound and radical in the context of the unionwide policy of institutionalisation to contain the influence of religion in Soviet society. While the demands from the central policy makers remained the same, they were varied in their consequences for each religious figure and community. In Gorno-Badakhshan, the commissioners and state officials had to embrace the challenges of adapting and adjusting a single and union-wide Soviet policy into a distinct religious context.

The consequences of these changes were both positive and negative for the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s as well as for other Muslim figures in Gorno-Badakhshan. On the positive side, as

[80] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (12 June 1970), p. 44.

examples in the chapter indicate, the official *khalifa*s and *mullo*s in Gorno-Badakhshan did not remain minor figures but turned to be the sole religious leader in their locales. By the end the period under study, they were leading religious affairs in a larger territory over greater congregations, i.e., the population of several villages within a *sel'sovet*, the district centre and the city of Khorog. They turned into ambiguous social actors connecting state, community and religion in Soviet society. On the negative side as in other parts of Soviet Central Asia, their activity was formally limited to that of praying and performing religious rituals at life-cycle events within the defined territories. Their religious life like that of the rest of the Muslim population in Gorno-Badakhshan, evolved in isolation without contact with religious figures and fellow Ismaili believers abroad. A more distinct impact of the Soviet religious policy for the Muslim figures in Gorno-Badakhshan was that they even lacked the experience of being part of institutions such as spiritual directorates, which provided religious education for limited numbers of students at home and abroad in Islamic institutes. The spiritual directorates and their trained cadres i.e., the *imom-khatibs* for each republic emerged as a new state-controlled religious hierarchy. As the examples in the chapter reveal, the attempt to open a mosque or prayer house, to form a central office for the senior Ismaili *khalifa* in the province, or the possibility of establishing contact with the Ismaili Imam were never accepted by the central party state authorities. All these examples point to the negative consequences of Soviet religious policy on the Ismaili and Sunni religious figures in this province.

The fact that *khalifa*s and *mullo*s remained under the strict control of local government did not mean that their social role in Soviet society diminished. What was more important about the changing role and relationships of the religious figures is that they used different strategies in response to state regulation and control of their activities. The continuous analysis of religious situation in Gorno-Badakhshan by the commissioners reveals the need that the CRA had for authentic information in order to inform its policy. Beyond this expedience, it seemed that the presence of the Ismailis as the majority in this region, their practice of distinct rituals and the absence of a centralised religious leadership, was a matter of concern for both local authorities and the council.

Chapter 4: Religious Festivals and Rituals

Introduction

Religious rituals and festivals, like many other aspects of religious life in the Soviet Union, remained subject to continuous ideological and administrative pressure in the period under study. They also served as the main benchmark for delineating the influence and extent of religion in Soviet society. Soviet ethnographers analysed the various kinds of religious rites through the prism of the survival of traditional ways of life in modern society.[1] Ethnographic studies focusing on the socio-cultural and economic transformations in Gorno-Badakhshan in the Soviet period also contributed to this concept of 'survival' with specific empirical findings. It should be also noted that religious rites and Muslim festivals were not studied on their own terms. Sporadic information on the religious rituals was, however, provided in the ethnographic studies on life-cycle events (birth, wedding and funerals), family relations and agricultural practices.[2] What is also important to note is that the chronological frame of most of the Soviet ethnographic studies conducted among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan was limited to the period from the end of 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Late Soviet and post-Soviet researchers therefore relied heavily on the data provided by the pre-Revolutionary Russian researchers on the performance of religious rituals among the population of Pamir.[3]

---

[1] For a critique of how the notion of survival was widely used for characterisation of different religious customs among Muslims of Central Asia, see Devin DeWeese, 'Survival strategies: Reflections on the Notion of Religious 'Survivals' in Soviet Ethnographic Studies of Muslim Religious Life in Central Asia', in Florian Muhlfried and Sergey Sokolovskii, ed., *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Zurich, 2011), pp. 35-58.

[2] See the outline of themes of the ethnographic research on the Pamir (Soviet Badakhshan) by L. F. Monogarova and I. M. Muhiddinov, 'Etnograficheskoe izuchenie Sovetskogo Badakhshana', in R. M. Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 352-384.

[3] See for instance the time frame for ethnographic studies on weddings among the people of Shugnan by Z. Yusufbekova, *Sem'ia i semeinyi byt Shugnantsev (konets XIX-nachalo XX v)* (Dushanbe, 2001); I. Muhiddinov, *Relikty doislamskikh obychaev i obriiadov u zemledel'tsev zapadnogo Pamira, (XIX-nachalo XX vv),* vol. 1, Dushanbe, 1984. For the detailed analysis of the writing of Russian scholars on the religious belief of the Ismailis, see a study by N. Dawlatbekov, *Osveshenie Ismailizma na Pamire v trudakh Russkikh dorevoliutsionnikh isledovatelei* (Dushanbe, 1995) and his second study on the writings of Russian scholars on the pre-Islamic practices and belief among the population of Pamir, *Doislamskie verovaniia naseleniia zapadnogo Pamira (po materialam Russkikh isledovani)* (Dushanbe, 1995). Studies by A. Lashkariev, 'Pokhoronno-pominal'naia obriiadnost' Bartangtsev (konets XIX-XX vv)', unpublished candidate

The reports by the CARC commissioners from Gorno-Badakhshan stressed the continuous measures of surveillance and atheist propaganda intended to limit and gradually eliminate the presence of religious rituals and festivals among the Muslim communities in this province. As a result of the anti-religious campaign, the instances of performing rites dramatically decreased, the space of celebration became marginalized and the relationship with sacred religious customs changed. Nevertheless a critical analysis of the archives also reveals that despite all these changes essential rites and festivals still provided space for symbolizing and expressing a distinct worldview by the religious figures and the community. In the context of Soviet anti-religious propaganda and pressure, Muslim practices, including rites, especially ones performed on the occasion of life-cycle events, also emerged as distinct markers of traditional identity for the community members, as a cause of dispute between religious figures, and created a market which generated income.

This chapter examines the ways in which religious rites and festivals were observed in the context of the changing Soviet religious policy in Gorno-Badakhshan. The CARC archives provide a record of instances of the continuous investigation and monitoring of religious rites and festivals to ensure their compliance with legislation. The analysis of data on religious rites and festivals in this chapter proceeds in the following way. The first two sections explore the context of monitoring, study and the practice of the two major annual festivals, *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon*, and their related rites. The third section analyses the specific case of the performance of the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* among the Ismaili population of Gorno-Badakhshan. The final section of the chapter looks at changes in the social and cultural milieu, and especially the implementation of new non-religious Soviet rituals intended to supplant the religious ones. This chapter does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of each of the major rituals and festivals, but rather to examine how they were observed in the light of the changing context of Soviet policy in the period under study.

Religious rituals, including those performed on the occasions of marriage and death, according to Soviet legislation had to be carried out by registered *domullo*s and *khalifa*s. In

---

dissertation (Moscow, 2007) and A. Shoinbekov, 'Traditsionnaia pogrebal'no-pominal'naia obriiadnost' Ismailitov zapadnogo Pamira (konets XIX-nachalo XXI vv)', unpublished candidate dissertation (St. Petersburg, 2007) both provided a detailed analysis of the rites of burial and funeral among the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan. Nevertheless, the extent of the Soviet policy of regulation, monitoring and surveillance of religious rites at funerals has not been thoroughly analysed yet.

the wider Muslim context in Soviet Central Asia, the officially recognised rituals ranged from collective prayer on the eve of and during the religious festivals, the Friday prayer, the recitation of the Qur'an, the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, and funeral prayers.[4] The documents under analysis from Gorno-Badakhshan do not make it explicitly clear which kind of rituals were legitimate in contexts where mosques did not exist. It appears that gathering for communal prayer during festivals and funerals was often deemed illegal, and even interrupted by officials, especially prior to the registration of the official religious figures in each village council.

The two main Muslim festivals of the year during which the council instructed its representatives to study and monitor the religious situation were *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon.* Another immediate task for the commissioners was to inform the local Communist Party and government organs so that they might take measures to intercept and prevent any violations and control the religious activities of the clergy and believers during these festivals.[5] What these instructions specifically meant was that the CARC and later the CRA commissioners had to call upon the organs of the local government to take preventive measures against violations of the law on religious cults prior to the months of the festivals. On the occasions of festivals, the commissioners were required immediately to record and report cases when *mullo*s and *khalifa*s illegally organised communal prayer, and disseminated religious views among the people.

In other parts of the Tajik SSR, religious activity among Muslims was supervised through SADUM representatives in the registered mosques. From the mid-1960s to late 1980s there were 17 registered mosques functioning in n the Tajik SSR that could only serve a small portion of the Muslim population. These registered mosques were located mainly in the capital city of Dushanbe and its surrounding districts, in the city of Leninobod (present-day Khujand), in Kulob and Qurghonteppa. For the rest of the Tajik SSR, including the territory of Gorno-Badakhshan, there were no registered mosques. The absence of registered mosques in these areas inevitably exposed large numbers of religious figures and ordinary believers to the risk of violating the laws on religion as merely the act of

[4] See Eren Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', pp. 139-174.

[5] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 1, Instructions from the CARC chairman Polianskii to Mirzobek Bodurov for study and monitoring the religious situation on the eve of the Muslim holy month of fasting and celebration of *Id-i Ramazon* (3 June 1950), pp. 1-4; and on the celebrations of Id-i Qurbon (29 August 1950), pp. 9-11.

assembling for communal prayer in places other than registered buildings of worship was considered an illegal activity.[6]

In the context of Gorno-Badakhshan the legality of a practice was very much dependent on its being performed by a registered *khalifa* (for the Ismailis) and a *domullo* (for the Sunnis). The status of these officially registered clergy in Gorno-Badakhshan was similar to that of the *imom-khatib*s serving within official mosques in the Tajik SSR and other Muslim-populated areas of Soviet Union. By 1985 there were 42 registered *khalifa*s and *mullo*s in Gorno-Badakhshan, which had a population of approximately 148, 500. In other parts of the Tajik SSR there were 17 registered mosques which were supposed to serve a population of more than 4 million. This means that the number of registered or official clergy was greater in Gorno-Badakhshan, which population accounted for 3% of population of the whole of the Tajik SSR. Nevertheless the numbers of 17 mosques with their registered clergy serving the rest of the population of the Tajik SSR did not represent the real religious situation among the Muslim population. Sergei Poliakov's study reveals that in the 1980s hundreds of unregistered mosques and religious figures were functioning in this republic, as each village had its own unregistered mosque. [7] That however, did not mean that apart from official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s any other itinerant *mullo*s could lead collective prayer on the occasion of funerals or foster further religious activity during religious festivals and life-cycle events. The authorities were immediately informed and dealt on time with instances when registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s spread religious views or organised communal.[8]

4.1. Practice of *Ruza* and *Id-i Ramazon*

> In view of the situation, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults requests that upon receipt of this letter you inform the local party heads and local Soviet organs of the arrival of the Muslim fast and holiday of *uraz-bayram.*[9] At the same time you should develop and implement sophisticated

[6] See Arapov, *Islam i Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo (1944-1990). Sbornik Dokumentov* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 64-75.

[7] Poliakov, *Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia* (New York, 1992), pp. 96-105.

[8] In the early 1950s and 1960s the CARC representatives often reported on illegal gatherings for communal prayer, especially among the Sunni population in Gorno-Badakhshan. From 1970 to 1980 the CRA reports from this province have fewer references to instances of communal prayer.

[9] *Uraz-Bayram* is a Turkish name denoting the month of fasting and the festival of Ramadan. Showing disregard for linguistic and local variants, especially for Tajik-Persian speaking population of Tajik SSR, this and another term *Qurban-Bayram* were used in the instructions sent from the CARC/CRA to all of its representatives in various Muslim republics and *oblast*s of the USSR.

> measures to limit the activity of the Muslim clergy, including registered societies, and counter the activity of the so-called 'itinerant clergy' and believers, who are much more active during this month.[10]

This directive from CARC to its first commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan suggests how vital it was for the council to assess religious activity, in particular that of *ruza* (fasting) during the month of Ramazon. A directive like this also reveals how the commissioners acted as bureaucrats to ensure the implementation of the centralised Communist Party and Soviet state policy in remote areas. While control over the religious situation involved party, local government and state security officials, the study of religious activity on the occasion of the religious festival was the priority of the commissioners. In the case of *Id-i Ramazon*, for instance, the commissioners had to indicate whether *ruza* was observed by children, the youth or elders, by the *kolkhoz* members, workers, teachers, doctors, and members of the Communist Party and Komsomol. In their reports the commissioners had to show where the communal prayer was being held during the festival. What in particular needed to be reported were the breaches of the state legislation by religious personnel, as well as by the authorities. On the whole, rites and rituals were studied in both qualitative and quantitative terms, indicating the number of individuals observing *ruza* and participating in communal prayer, and providing a description of the process of the rituals, especially those conducted by leading religious figures.[11]

In their reports, the CARC commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan highlighted the fact that *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon* were celebrated by both the Sunni and the Shi'a Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan. The month-long fast was mainly kept by the Sunni Muslims in the districts of Wanj, Murgab and Qal'a-i Khumb. The Ismailis did not practice *ruza*.[12] In each of their reports on the occasion of the month long fast, the commissioner repeatedly stressed the case that it were mainly elders and the retired people who practiced *ruza.*

[10] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 1, (3 June 1950), p. 6.

[11] Similar methods of evaluating various forms of Muslim ritual were used for defining the increase and decrease in religious activity in other regions and republics. See for instance the CARC review of religious movements in Kyrgyz SSR analysed in Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', pp.139-147.

[12] See GA, GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, Report on the festival of Ramazon and practice of *ruza* by Mirzobek Bodurov to the CARC chairman Polianskii and to the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR, Khamidov. (8 August 1950), pp. 9-11.

Paradoxically, they also recorded instances, especially from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, when the majority of schoolchildren, youth and the middle-aged population, also observed ruza. These reports sometimes provide statistics about the number of individuals practicing *ruza*. However, it is not clear how the numbers were extrapolated from the general population, especially as fasting was an individual activity. Estimates of those fasting could possibly have been obtained by counting those who gathered for group *namoz* at the end of each day followed by the sharing of the *iftor* (special food for breaking the fast). Even if people from several villages gathered in one place for *namozi id* (holiday prayer), it could not be assumed that those praying on that day had actually been observing the fast for the whole month.[13]

Group prayer and *namozi id* (holiday prayer) during the two festivals were often held in an open field, near *mazor*s and *oston*s, or in *mehmon-khona*s (guest-houses) belonging to a *mullo* or one of the participants. Figures concerning the numbers of children and youth participating in prayer were not often provided, but it was mainly the elders, usually up to ten in number, who assembled for group prayer on each day of *ruza*. The highest number of those who gathered for communal holiday prayer in the 1950s was more than 70 in a few villages in the Wanj district. In some cases, these communal prayers were described as being very formal and short rather than lasting for hours as in the past. On one occasion, those gathered for a communal prayer were subsequently mobilised to conduct a day of *subbotnik* to plough the *kolkhoz* land for seasonal cultivation. Although a few cases of communal prayer are mentioned in the reports, there may have been more, especially in the years of concessions during the Second World War and the post-Stalinist years from 1953 to 1959.

There are reports of grave visitations by the Ismailis on the eve of the two festivals, but these were an individual family practice of worship rather than a communal prayer gathering. Instances of communal prayers during the month of Ramazon reportedly decreased significantly by the 1970s due to control by the local authorities and the increasing prevalence of atheist propaganda.

[13] For instance, on one occasion, the approximate numbers of the population practicing *ruza* in the districts of Wanj and Murgab (Sunni and Kyrgyz-speaking) were derived from the numbers of believers who reportedly participated in communal prayer on the days of the festivals. See the statistical forms for the numbers of population practicing *ruza* and celebrating *Id-i Ramazon*, GA. GBAO, f .110, op. 1, d. 9, (24 June 1954), pp. 14-20.

Despite the mass atheist propaganda being promoted at the time, instances of fasting among schoolchildren (girls from the age of nine and boys from twelve), the youth, members of the Komsomol and Communist Party were widespread. Where fasting was being observed by schoolchildren and the youth it was countered by an intensification of atheist propaganda in secondary schools and other educational and youth centres in each of district, *sel'sovet* and *kolkhoz*. The continuous polemical coverage of *ruza* in the regional and district newspapers, local radio stations, and in seminars, lectures by the *Znanie* society whose remit was to promote atheism during this period, hints at the strong and unabated influence of this practice among the Muslim population in Tajikistan.[14] The fact that subsequent reports make fewer mentions of the subject of fasting can be seen as a purely pragmatic strategy by the commissioners to show the progress they were making in implementing the religious policy and affecting a decline in the role of religion, particularly among the younger generation of Soviet citizens.

Apart from being "reactionary", religious practice, by default, *ruza* was also considered a custom damaging individual health, productivity and the state economy. Commissioner Bodurov often noted that act of not eating and drinking for the whole day led to a decline in productivity in the *kolkhoze*s. He described how sacrificing animal during the two festivals in the past had resulted in huge economic losses through the slaughter of thousands of livestock for the *kolkhoze*s and individual households.[15] In the period under study, the slaughter of animals was mainly reported during *Id-i Qurbon*, in which the sacrifice forms the main ritual. In 1951 Bodurov indicated that approximately sixty per cent of the Sunni population in the *oblast*, mainly older men and women, were observing *ruza.* The largest gathering of 70 people, for the communal holiday prayer, was reported in the village of Andarbak in Yazgulom Valley of the Wanj district.[16] However, the communal prayer was not held on that day in the centre of the district because the people

[14] The CARC statistical reports for the period under study do not show a significant decrease in the numbers of people attending mosque for prayer during the month and celebration of *Id-i Ramazon.*

[15] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 2, d. 2, 'Dokladnaia zapiska upolnomochennogo soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri oblispolkome po Gorno-Badakhshanskoi avtonomnoi oblasti', (8 August 1950), pp. 8-11.

[16] Yazgulom is name of a valley, as well as particular *sel'sovet* in the Wanj district. The population of the valley speak a distinct Yazgulomi language, a branch of the group of Pamiri languages. The Ismaili population in Yazgulom were converted to Sunni Islam by the representatives of the emirate of Bukhara in the second half of the nineteenth century. See L. Monogarova, 'Assimiliatsia i konsolidatsiia Pamirskikh narodov' in V. I. Bushkov, ed., *Sredneaziatskii etnographicheskii sbornik* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 47-55.

could not collect the 4,000 roubles requested by the leading *mullo* as a donation to the state treasury. On the whole the celebration and communal prayer were held in a very peaceful atmosphere, without any anti-government expression by the clergy or believers.[17]

In 1952 the representative reported that the majority of people in the Murgab district observed *ruza* and that the *mullos* organised communal prayers by gathering twenty or more people in each village. The reports of the numbers of animals slaughtered in each of the districts in Murgab during the festival were very high. For instance, in that year, it was noted that 500 sheep and goats were slaughtered on the day of the feast at the end of Ramazon, which was deemed by the representative to be a huge loss of livestock. However, the report does not mention that the main economic activity of this district was cattle breeding. Gradually, reports of instances of communal prayer decreased, and only a few members of the *kolkhoze*s would gather for prayer in an open field or at the nearby shrines. In one case it was reported that a leading *mullo* (Abdulloev Dawlat) in the Wanj district refused to lead the communal prayer in the month of Ramazon for which the believers then called him an apostate.[18]

In the years of relative freedom for religious activity, in the mid-1950s, communal prayer was often reported to have happened among the Sunni population of Gorno-Badakhshan. There were instances of administrative pressure by the local authorities on those observing rites but merely doing so was not considered a breach of the law. The secretary of the local party unit campaigned for stricter measures against fasting in a meeting with a group of women in a *kolkhoz* named after Stalin [19] in the Yazgulom Valley of the Wanj district. In the same district another official banned this practice and gave a warning that members of the *kolkhoz* would be expelled if they were found fasting. He even reportedly intimidated them by telling them of the arrest of an itinerant *mullo* in the neighbouring region of Gharm. Despite this warning, the fast was secretly observed in this and other districts, even

[17] GA GBAO, f. 110, op.1, d. 2, See report on the celebration of *Id-i Ramazon*, (12 August 1951), pp. 38-40.

[18] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Dokladnaia zapiska', (6 August 1952), pp. 69-70.

[19] There were many *kolkhoze*s and in each district named after Lenin, Stalin, Sotsializm, and the October Revolution, which can confuse the reader of the archives. For this reason, it will be easy to mention the name of the valley, village or district where the *kolkhoz* was located. For more on the development of the *kolkhoze*s in the GBAO, see, B. A. Antonenko, 'Sotsialisticheskie agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti', in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana*, pp. 220-53.

by children.[20] Administrative pressure on believers was meted out by each of the party and local government departments. Despite the fact that some officials and party members were themselves observant, there were some who were still prepared to interfere in the individual practice of religion even if this was not manifest in the public sphere.

In 1953 it was reported that teachers in a secondary school in the Wanj district used to force water into their students' mouths to stop them fasting. One girl threw down the cup of water and complained to her parents. After this incident her father and a *mullo* advised the girl to stop fasting, because she had already drunk water. This was a clear violation of the rights of believers, which in theory the council and its commissioner on the ground should have protected. However, the CARC commissioner could not take any action other than going to explain to the students how detrimental fasting was. The commissioner described fasting as a kind of practice performed under peer and social pressure. He reported further that some individuals were taking food with them to their workplace and eating it in secret. Moreover, he stressed that believers did not need any guidance from the *mullo* on how to observe *ruza.* They could act freely during the month of Ramazon according to the freedoms granted to them by Soviet law. For instance, in 1957 a leading *mullo* (Abdulloev Dawlat) refused to lead communal *namoz* for those gathered in the centre of the Wanj district.

In their meeting with the CARC commissioner, the believers asked him to force this *mullo* to lead the prayers for them. Bodurov, however, could not support them, stating that he was not obliged, nor was it recommended by Soviet legislation, to force someone to carry out religious activity if he declined it. On 1 May 1957, Bodurov reported that instead of the *Id-i Ramazon,* International Labour Day would be celebrated. Sudden interference by the authorities during the communal prayer on the occasions of *ruza*, *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon* in a few villages in Wanj and Qal'a-i Khumb district, seems to have offended believers. Reporting on the situation in this district, Bodurov actively advised believers to stop fasting. For instance, he attempted to convince them not to conduct *namozi tarobeh* (communal evening prayer) and *jum'a namoz* (Friday prayer) in an unregistered mosque in the village of Poi Mazor in the Wanj district.[21] By this strategy, the CARC commissioner distanced himself from the strict measures taken by the local authorities and adopted a

[20] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot', (8 July 1953), pp. 124-126.

[21] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 15, Informatsionyi otchiot o prokhozdenie mesiachnogo post 'Uraza-Bairam' v predelakh GBAO, (1 May 1957), pp. 1-4.

neutral role between group of believers and officials. Mosques and prayer rooms had been closed in the region in the 1930s and it was therefore regarded as a violation of the law to use them for communal prayer or festival celebrations.[22] However, by 1958 the commissioner indicated that *tarobeh* and the ritual of *khatm-i Qur'on* (reciting excerpts from the Qur'an) were held in open fields in some villages and that even the youth participated.

The statistics provided by commissioner Bodurov for the years from 1953 to 1958 provide estimates of the approximate number of individuals praying at home. It is not clear as to how these numbers represented the percentage of all of the believers that were praying and practicing religion, i.e., participating in religious festivals in the villages and districts in each year. In 1955, the commissioner reported that due to the transfer of the population from the villages of the Yazgulom *sel'sovet* in the Wanj district to the city of Dushanbe the numbers of individuals conducting prayer in this district decreased. Thus, it was estimated that out of the total 9,462 population of the Wanj district in 1956, approximately 5,462 conducted daily prayers at home. By 1957, however, their number had decreased to 2,495, even though most of the migrants had come back. In 1956 the number of individuals fasting is reported to have been 2,220. A year later their number had decreased further to 1,443 individuals observing *ruza.*[23]

Following the decrees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet government limiting religious activity in the years from 1959 to 1964, more instances of fasting were uncovered by the commissioners and local authorities. In 1961 Arifov, the second commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan reported that fasting was not only practiced in the remote villages but even by the secondary schools' students in the district centres. A secretary of the Komsomol unit in the district of Qal'a-i Khumb, a Russian man named Fedorov, told the CARC commissioner in the province that half the members of that unit were fasting. Another interesting instance was when it was discovered that the staffs of the central canteen in the centre of the district were fasting, even though they had to prepare meals for visitors. In this district it was revealed that itinerant *mullo*s brazenly gathered people together for communal prayer of *namozi tarobeh* in an open field, near a *mazor*.

[22] There were three mosques in this district that had not been used for religious service since 1938 and were designated as *kolkhoz* property.

[23] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 15, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot o proiskhozhdenie mesiachnogo post Uraza-Bairam v predelakh GBAO', (1 May 1957), pp. 1-4.

They organised the custom of *khona-gashtak* in each neighbourhood, obliging the householder to provide a feast for the guests who would stay until late and discuss religious themes.[24] Arifov reported:

> It is not too much to note that, in the absence of mosques and other devotional buildings; the itinerant clergy were not only merely active, but become bold in the month of Ramazon. They seek easy money during *ruza* by gathering more believers, secretly taking them to visit their houses and *mehmon-khonas* (guest-houses). Worst of all is that by referring to the (sayings) of the Prophet Muhammad during this time, the clergy even insist that fasting is an obligation for children of both genders from the age of seven on.[25]

By 1962 the commissioner noted that fasting and evenings of *iftor* were observed very simply without sacrifice or communal prayer in the Qal'a-i Khumb and Wanj districts. In contrast, it was observed that the festival was celebrated more lavishly in the villages in Afghanistan where people gathered for three days to celebrate the festival, playing *buzkashi*[26] an event ending with a communal prayer.[27] Albeit without this form of celebration, *ruza* was still observed on Soviet territory, even by a majority of the schoolchildren living at the centre of the Qal'a-i Khumb district.

This was an alarming issue for the authorities, especially in the period of renewed anti-religious struggle from 1959 to 1964. The commissioner Arifov, reported on how *ruza* was practised by the teachers, and even the director of the secondary school who organised *shabi iftor* (night of offering feast) in the month of *Ramazon*. Arifov immediately questioned the role of the teachers in educating schoolchildren and stated that both teachers and students remained under the influence of the *mullo*s. For this reason he urged the provincial party and government authorities to isolate the youth from the influence of the itinerant *mullo*s. The way to do this was to improve scientific and atheist propaganda among the population.[28] The commissioner complained that *mullo*s were not only gathering people for communal prayer but also propagating *ruza.* He reported an instance

[24] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, 'Informatsiia o prokhozhdenii posta 'ramazona'yi 'Kurban-Bayram' po Kalai-Khumbskomu yi Vanchskomu raionakh', (28 February 1961), pp. 6-10.

[25] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, 'Informatsionnyi otchiot, (2 March 1962), p. 19.

[26] *Buzkashi* : lit. goat bashing, is a type of polo played on horseback with the headless corpse of a goat.

[27] The border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan is delineated by the Panj River, known to Western visitors to Central Asia as the Oxus.

[28] Ibid., p. 19.

when a *mullo* (Nodirov), in one of the villages of the Wanj district, made a speech after communal prayer that:

> 'Those who never keep *ruza*, God will turn away from them, they will be cursed and go to hell.' The question that can be asked is where were the rural intelligentsia, activists and the administration of the *kolkhoz* that let Nodirov utter such provocative words. This suggests that in the Wanj district, especially in remote areas, the situation of educating children in the spirit of Communism remained unfavourable.[29]

This statement reveals that the commissioner directed his criticism towards the intelligentsia and *sel'skie activisty* (rural activists) members of the Communist Party and local government who remained unable to control the religious situation. Among the Sunni Kyrgyz population in the Murgab district, where the itinerant *mullo*s reportedly intensified their activities from time to time, *ruza* was observed by most of the population. An article in the *Badakhkhshoni Soveti*, the central *oblast* newspaper, denounced the activity of a *mullo*, Abdulamid Abdurahmonov, who collected money from each believer, forcing them to slaughter a sheep and a cow as *khudoi* (sacrifice to God).[30] Slaughtering hundreds of animals (sheep and goats) in the Murgab district was unprecedented in the republic as a whole. The commissioner openly criticised the district authorities who were aware of, but made no attempt to prevent, sacrifices of this sort.

The widespread cases of animal slaughter, which sharply reduced the numbers of livestock, were deemed detrimental to family. The same economic harm was done to the population when the *mullo*s practiced the custom of *isqot* (dividing the property of the deceased at the end of the funeral), a practice from which the itinerant *mullo*s greatly benefitted. Arifov wrote that this custom of *isqot* was not mentioned in any of the Islamic books, but practiced only by the Kyrgyz clergy in the Murgab district. It was a custom that decimated, and ultimately destroyed, the economy of family. Arifov called on the *ispolkom* to take measures to ban this extorting custom. In a meeting with the group of believers in Murgab district, the officials warned the *mullo*s about the consequences of sacrificing, collecting payments during religious holidays and conducting faith-healing.[31]

Mass propaganda was not sufficient and it was unrealistic to trust information from the districts, when some party members and officials were themselves observing *ruza*. All

[29] GA. GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d.17, 'Informatsii po voprosam religioznykh kul'tov', (26 April 1962), p. 14.

[30] See article by A. Solehboev, 'Khurofot-kishani hayot', *Badakhshoni Soveti* 59, (25 March 1962), p. 2.

[31] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 1741, (9 January 1965), pp. 21-22.

these shortcomings of the *ispolkoms* and party units on the ground gave the clergy an opportunity to use new tactics for their own benefit during the month-long fast. According to information received from the Murgab district, the *mullo*s preached that if someone was not able to observe *ruza* in the month of Ramazon, God not only forgave them, but also allowed them to observe a substitute fast. By this tactic, the *mullo*s encouraged officials and rural activists to observe *ruza* at another time, which allowed the clergy to obtain benefits twice a year. To outsiders, it was therefore difficult to know who among the officials was observing *ruza* as they would eat freely in the month of Ramazon and fast on another occasion.[32] What was reported as a successful measure to prevent fasting in this district was the enrolment of schoolchildren in the newly-formed *internat*s (Soviet boarding schools), where food was supplied by the *kolkhoz*es. The students studying in these *internat*s lived apart from their families and were thus not affected by the 'prejudice, belief and ideas' preached by the *mullo*s.

At the height of the renewed anti-religious campaign in early 1963, more details of violations, such as *mullo*s who gathered people for collective prayer, visited houses and collected *fitri ruza* (payment), even from schoolchildren, Komsomols and 'backward members of the Communist Party', were once again revealed. On one occasion, a club of a *kolkhoz* in Qal'a-i Khumb district was turned into a mosque during the month of Ramazon. Reporting this revival of religiosity, the commissioner Arifov immediately complained about the officials and rural activists who themselves were neither aware of the anti-religious propaganda nor spread it among the ordinary people:

> The saddest condition is that some of the heads of the *kolkhoze*s, especially the *partorg*s (organisers of Communist Party campaigns and events) in the district of Qal'a-i Khumb, who knew well the damage caused by *ruza* and its consequences for society, took a neutral position and did not take measures against believers every year. Therefore it was not surprising that some senior responsible officials and even members of the Communist Party did not reveal the true picture of the religious situation.[33]

He further complained to the *obkom* and *oblispolkom* that *ispolkom*s in the districts and *sel'sovet*s were not willing to report cases of violations by the clergy. Local officials remained reluctant to prevent people from observing fasting. The commissioner

[32] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 18, 'Informatsii po prokhozdenii musul'manskogo prazdnika 'post mohi Ramazon' po raionam oblasti v 1963 godu. (16 April 1963), pp. 1-4.

[33] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, 'Informatsiia o sostoianii religioznosti naseleniia i provedenia antireligioznoi raboti na territorii GBAO za 1963 god, (16 January 1964), p. 38.

complained about cases when high-profile party members, even as well as doctors who instead of promoting medicine themselves practiced *ruza*. Having observed this situation, Arifov urged the party and government heads in the province to prosecute those violating the law on religion, namely those individuals who turned the club building into a mosque in the month of *Ramazon*. He considered it a deception and believed that some officials and party members closed their eyes to cases of fasting, even though aware of the consequences.[34]As noted above, in theory the practice of *ruza*, conducting different forms of prayers, and the celebration of festivals, were not illegal activities. Conducting these rites and rituals within official mosques was approved by the spiritual directorate and was permitted.[35] What was considered illegal and a breach of the law on religion was the attempt by the clergy to organise prayers, turn buildings into mosques, collect donations and preach. This was the standard approach by the council in its attempts to regulate religious life in most of the Muslim-populated areas of the Soviet Union. In the Sunni-populated districts of Gorno-Badakhshan, organising group prayers, communal *iftor* and evening discussions at the homes of believers during the month of Ramazon, were all reported as illegal activities.

Fasting was an issue continuously criticised by the Soviet health authorities for medical reasons.[36] In 1966 the commissioner reported that despite the outbreak of measles in an unsanitary situation in the villages of Saghirdasht valley of the Qal'a-i Khumb district, parents categorically rejected any help from the health services. They did not allow their children to be taken to hospital because of *ruza*. The practice was even blamed for the death of a child in one village when a mother was not able to feed her baby because she herself had not been eating during *ruza.* Gradually, the commissioner indicated that the people of this district were divided in their opinion towards the practice of fasting. For instance, in 1966 it was pointed out that the intelligentsia in the Qal'a-i Khumb district was divided into those with "backward" views who supported fasting and those with "progressive" views who rejected it. In the same year, the commissioner reported that a teacher from this district refused to eat in the morning with the guests from the brigade of atheist lecturers who were staying in his house for a night. The teachers in this district also visited houses for the breakfast meal of *iftor*. As a result they were considered backward

[34] Ibid., p. 5.

[35] See *Islam in the Soviet Union*, (London, 2000), pp. 468-485.

[36] See *The Subtlest Battle*, pp. 13-14.

and unable to prevent fasting among the students. The other group of people were the staff of the canteen in the central hospital, who practiced *ruza*. For the CARC commissioner, these instances pointed to weak atheist propaganda and a loss of control over the itinerant *mullo*s whose influence prevailed among the various strata of the population.[37] Reports of officials checking who among employees of the educational, health and public-catering sectors was fasting, suggest that a well-coordinated effort was in place to curb this practice.

The provincial authorities declared that these measures would limit the practice of fasting to only a few elders in each village. What seemed to have been missed in this monitoring was that these elders were not a diminishing number but were an increasing demographic. Even some former officials and party members started to fast after retirement, organising *iftor*s and assembling during festivals. For the clergy and believers, administrative interference was a fact of life, especially concerning activities considered to be violations of the law on religion. For instance, in 1969 when an unregistered *mullo* in the village of Kevron in the Qal'a-i Khumb district organised communal prayer, it was dissolved by the arrival of an instructor from the *raykom* party and the chairman of the *kolkhoz*. Even though the believers had not been conducting prayers or sharing a group meal, the gathering was immediately criticised in the meeting of the local party branch. The next CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Shohyoqub Nayimov, stated that the majority of people had stopped fasting under the influence of the socio-economic and cultural progress in their worldview. As for the elders, who were mainly above sixty, they continued to keep *ruza* as a result of social pressure.[38]

These socio-cultural advances were not specified in the report, but presumably referred to the appearance of new schools, theatres, cultural houses, district radio stations, newspapers, hospitals, medical centres, roads, electricity, radio and telephone lines in the *oblast*.[39] However, changing attitudes towards practices such as fasting were also very much dependent on the role of the family, especially the elders, as well as the religious personnel and how they adapted to the changing socio-cultural milieu. As for the official account of the decrease in the number of people keeping *ruza*, it also depended very much

[37] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 17, 'Informatsiia o narusheniiakh zakonodatel'stva o kul'takh po Kalai Khumbskomu raionu', (8 February 1966), pp. 13-14.

[38] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 2, (17 February 1969), p. 10.

[39] For more on socio-cultural changes in Soviet Badakhshan see L. F. Monogarova, *Preobrazovaniia v bytu i kul'tury pripamirskikh narodnostei* (Moscow, 1972).

on the reliability of the information received from the field. For instance Nayimov reported that, unlike in the past, the majority of Ismailis had stopped visiting graves and shrines during *Id-i Ramazon*, and did no more than only prepare special dishes and light candles to fulfil the wishes of the *arwoh*s (spirits) at home. By considering these rituals as leftovers from a past society, he depicts *Id-i Ramazon* as a festival for the rich stratum of the population, especially the clergy. According to his account, in the past on the day of festivals the Ismaili *pir*s dressed themselves in new clothes and people would greet them by saying 'muborak boshad' (congratulations for your new clothes). If, however, a poor person dressed in new clothes, people were curious to know their provenance. Group celebrations and collective prayers were held therefore at the houses of *pir*s or near the *ostons* (the sacred stepping places). [40]

By 1971, Nayimov reported that most of the population of the Gorno-Badakhshan, especially the Ismailis had no knowledge of the calendar of religious festivals.[41] What the commissioner did not point out was how the timing for festivals was set by the *khalifa*s, *mullo*s, *okhon*s who were aware of the Islamic calendar. Their knowledge of Islamic calendar was based on the manuscripts preserved by them. Can it be than argued that Nayimov was unaware of this practice of Islamic calendar by some clergy and believers? The extent of the study of religious situation by the commissioners does not give doubt about their unawareness of the religious situation, even in the remote areas. Like their colleagues in other regions of the former Soviet Union, these party bureaucrats i.e., the commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan provided less genuine information about religious life but moulded their reports to fit ideological demands of the state. Contradictory enough, the reports until the late 1980s refer to the existence of *ruza* and the continuous need for strengthening monitoring and spread of atheist policy.

4.2. *Id-i Qurbon*

The council's instructions to study and monitor religious activity during the festival of sacrifice, *Id-i Qurbon*, were similar to those for *Id-i Ramazon.* However, what mainly troubled the authorities was the sacrifice of animals during *Id-i Qurbon*. The commissioner Bodurov from the beginning of his career monitored how a large number of animals were sacrificed by the Sunni population in the districts of Murgab and Wanj. Apart from the

[40] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 20, (17 February 1969), pp. 7-9.

[41] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, 'Informatsiia o prokhozhdenii musul'manskogo religioznogo posta 'Uraza' i *Id-i Ramazon* v 1971 godu v GBAO', (30 November 1971), p. 134.

sacrifices, a goup of twenty to forty or more men would usually gather for communal prayers on the day of this festival in these districts. The ritual of sacrifice was not only a concern to the authorities in this region but, as Ro'i indicates, was 'a thorn in the side of the regime' in all of the Muslim-populated republics and *oblast*s of the Soviet Union.[42]

The first CARC commissioner Bodurov noted that prior to the 1950s, even *kolkhoz* livestock was used for sacrifices. By 1951, however, the numbers of sacrificed animals and individuals participating in communal prayer, decreased significantly. For instance, 600 people attended communal prayer during *Id-i Qurbon* in 1947 and by 1951 the total number of Sunnis participating in communal prayer during this festival was 239 of which 135 in the Wanj and 104 in the Murgab districts. This decrease in the numbers attending group prayers did not mean that the *mullo*s had also ceased their activity. The commissioner noted that many *mullo*s in the Sunni-populated districts were actively gathering people together for communal prayer during the festival and encouraging them to participate in the sacrificial practices.[43]

Widespread slaughter of cattle was reported in 1956 among the Kyrgyz Sunni population in the Murgab district. The numbers of animals sacrificed in each of the *kolkhoz*es and *sel'sovet*s of this district increased by a few hundred in comparison to previous years. In contrast, the instances of gathering for communal *namoz* during the *Id-i Qurbon* had decreased by the mid-1950s. A small group of ten men gathered for the communal prayer of *namozi tarobeh* on the day of the festival in the Wanj district. The CARC commissioner visited the district on the day of the celebration and revealed that dozens of sheep, goats and more than 200 turkeys and hens had been sacrificed by believers.

As for the Ismailis, the representative noted that believers, including the clergy, invited guests to their houses for a special feast during this festival, lit candles outside their houses, visited the graves of their dead to offer prayers and light candles there during the *Id-i Qurbon*. The candles were prepared in advance from a juniper stick tied in oiled cotton which would burn for several minutes. In that period the ritual of lighting candles was observed throughout the region by believers visiting the *mazor*s attributed to the Shi'i Imam Muhammad Boqir (the Shugnan district); the shrine of Shohburhonidin, and shrine of the Shohabdullo Wali (the Rosh'tqal'a district); the *oston*s of Shoh Qambar (the Ishkashim district); the *oston*s of Khoja Nuriddin, Mushkilkusho in the Rushan district and

[42] See *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 494.

[43] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (3 September 1951), p. 45.

other sacred places in the region. However, instances of communal prayer even in small groups were not reported to have taken place among the Ismailis during the festival.[44] The slaughter of *kolkhoz* livestock had reportedly ceased by this time, but individual sacrifices by each family were widespread up to 1957.Generally no serious violations of the law on religion by believers and religious figures during the festival of *Id-i Qurbon* were reported from 1950 to 1957. It was, however, indicated that some *mullo*s in the Murgab district were leading the celebration with more than a hundred sheep and goats slaughtered in the centre of the district and the *kolkhoze*s. The numbers of animals sacrificed among the Sunni population in the Wanj district for that year had not remained stable and a few cases of sacrifice were reported among the Ismailis.

These few accounts can not reveal the full picture of how the festival was celebrated in different parts of the *oblast* where Ismailis were living. Individual Ismaili households in their villages celebrated *Id-i Qurbon* by slaughtering a designated sheep. It is plausible to note that the commissioner did not receive accurate information, or deliberately did not report what he observed about the celebration of religious festivals among the Ismailis. For instance, in 1957 the commissioner Bodurov compared the differences between the celebrations of *Id-i Qurbon* among the Ismailis living in Tajik SSR to that of their neighbours across the border in Afghanistan. He noted that among Ismailis living in the border villages of Soviet Tajikistan, *Id-i Qurbon* passed very quietly with the exception of few families lighting candles on graves. On the contrary, he reported that festival was celebrated lavishly in villages on the Afghan side of the border and that it was visible as candles were lit all over the villages, in houses, at graves.

In the past, the commissioner noted that, the celebration of the two festivals had lasted for three days among the Ismailis, but in the 1950s they were only celebrated for one day in a family milieu.[45] By 1950s, the commissioner reported that even among the Sunni population of Gorno-Badakhshan the sacrifices were confined to the family level rather than in the public milieu.

[44] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 14, 'Dokladnaia zapiska o proiskhozhdenie religioznogo prazdnika Kurban-Bairam v predelakh GBAO', (1 August 1956), pp. 2-4.

[45] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 14, 'Dokladnaia zapiska o proiskhozhdenie religioznogo prazdnika Kurban-Bayram v predelakh GBAO', (30 June 1957), pp. 7-14.

In the period of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964 the CARC documents only mention scarce occurrences of sacrifices. It was however, reported that itinerant *mullo*s in Wanj, Murgab and Qal'a-i Khumb actively organised a custom of *khona-gashtak* house to obtain benefits, which was deemed a detrimental custom in both material and spiritual senses.

> Firstly, on this day believers organise a big feast. Secondly, the clergy stay late discussing religious themes until morning in order to bother believers' minds by talking about certain kinds of life after death. In the morning the clergy collects alms of *khairiyot* (charity) from few believers and then continues this practice till the end of the festivals. At the end of the holidays the clergy attempt to gather more believers for prayer in an open field and to collect money from each individual. The clergy conduct all the religious prescriptions secretly, for they are well aware that for such gross violations of the legislation on religion, they are criminally responsible in the eyes of society. In addition to violating the law on religion, such gatherings do not end without an animal being sacrificed.[46]

In the period of the renewed anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964, few instances of sacrificing animals were reported by the commissioners. This either means that the numbers of animals slaughtered had decreased due to administrative pressure or that instances of sacrifice were deliberately not monitored by the rural activists in the villages. Regarding the observation and perception of various festivals among the different groups in society, he stated:

> The population of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast in general and the faithful in particular, do not consider 'Uraz-Bayram' and 'Kurban-Bayram' as their national tradition. What concerns young people that they do not pay attention to these festivals? At present neither the elderly nor the young people visit these graves or sacred places. Cases of children skipping school during the festivals were not noted. Lavish celebration of these festivals by believers was also not observed. Since there was no sociological study regarding these festivals in our *oblast*, we do not have any statistical material. It should be noted that not all of the precepts of the *shar'ia* are obeyed as the majority of the believers do not even know its prescriptions and even less the youth. The religious festival of mourning of *ashura* (*shahsei-wahsei*) of the Shi'is, the day of the adoption of Islam, *Mawludi Nabi* (the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad), *shabi Laylat ul-qadr* (night of power), and many other Muslim religious holidays and other memorable dates are gradually disappearing from people's mind.[47]

[46] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 6, 'Informatsiia o sostoianii religioznosti naseleniia i provedeniiakh meropriatii po usileniiu kontrolia za sobliudeniem zakonodatel'stva o kul'takh po Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi oblasti za 1962 god', (2 January 1963), p. 25.

[47] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 8, 'Godovoi informatsionnyi otchiot', (14 February 1972), p. 21.

The celebration of some of these festivals and rituals such as *Mawludi Nabi* was briefly recorded in reports dating from the 1950s. As for the observation of *ashura*, the documents do not reveal any information about its practice among the Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan. The situation in other parts of the Tajik SSR was different with *Mawludi Nabi* being celebrated, especially in the registered mosques. The ceremony of *ashura* in the month of Muharram was actively commemorated among the Shi'i population in the Azerbaijan SSR, in Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and in the Bukhara province of the Uzbek SSR.[48] The ceremonies performed in the month of Muharram, including large crowds gathering for communal prayer, performing the ritual of *shahsei-wahsei* (self flagellation and scourging) and *ta'ziyah* (passion play) in the registered and unregistered mosques, caused more concern for the Soviet authorities than the two festivals.[49] As the commissioner Nayimov reported this kind of commemoration of *ashura* with rituals of mourning was not practised by the Ismaili Shi'is living in Badakhshan. However, he did report how the population of some remote villages commemorated the *shahada* (martyrdom) of the third Shi'i Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali (626-680) which lasted for ten days during which it was forbidden to wash the body or clothes or slaughter animals for food. This period ended with the sacrifice of a designated sheep as *oshi pir* (feast of the *pir*). It should be noted that, although it was not practiced continuously, this manner of celebration/commemoration still exists.[50]

The commissioners do not provide consistent information about the celebration of *Id-i Qurbon* for some years from the 1960s to 1970s indicating that the festival had almost disappeared. However by 1977, the new CRA commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, Nishon Hamroev, reported on his plan to inform the local party and government authorities to strengthen control over the activity of the registered and unregistered religious figures during the celebration of *Idi-i Qurbon*.[51] This information about the monitoring of *Id-i Qurbon* suggests bureaucratic shortcomings in both implementing religious policy and

[48] For more on the observation of this *ahsura* month among the Twelver Shi'i community in Bukhara, see the reports by the commissioner in Bukhara province in the collection of CARC archives by Karimov Elyor and David Abramson, ed., *Religion Made Official: A Comprehensive Collection of Documents on Religion from the State Archives of Uzbekistan (1920 -1960s)* (Almaty, 2009).

[49] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 503-505.

[50] Although not widespread, the ritual of *oshi pir* (food for the *pir*) still exists in a few villages among the Ismailis of Badakhshan.

[51] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 11, (20 February 1980), p. 13.

studying the ritual. For if the festival had ceased to exist, why would the commissioners have received special instructions from the council to monitor and report on religious situation during celebration of *Id-i Qurbon* in the region? Likewise, as had been reported that communal prayer, sacrifice and shrine visitation had ceased to exist, why was there any need to dispatch a special brigade to conduct atheist lectures to highlight the detriments of these practices.[52]

4.3. Ritual of *Charogh-i rawshan*

As shown above, the celebration of the two main Muslim festivals by the Sunni Muslim population in Gorno-Badakhshan featured prominently in the reports under study. By contrast, less information was revealed about the celebration of *Id-i Qurbon* and *Id-i Ramazon* among the Ismailis. The priorities for the commissioners studying the religious situation were to define how ritual performance facilitated an increase in religiosity among the population. The rituals performed on the occasion of funerals were considered by the authorities as the most deep-rooted religious rituals among the Ismailis in this period. That did not mean that the funeral ceremony among the Sunni population was not monitored by the authorities. Funeral rites among the Sunni population in other regions of the Tajik SSR and other Muslim-populated areas of the former Soviet Union were also strictly monitored and reported on. Funeral prayers held in the registered mosques were noted, with the estimates of the numbers of attendees and the payments made by them . The ceremony was considered a problem for the authorities when large numbers of visitors paid respect to the deceased.[53]

The CARC archives from Gorno-Badakhshan however, provide relatively little information about funerals among the Sunni population in this province. Apart from describing the funeral process and including some excerpts about *janoza* (funeral prayer),

[52] Recent studies in Tajikistan on the basis of oral interviews and observation provided a detailed description of the spring related practices, as well as shrine pilgrimage and worship among the Ismailis of Badakhshan. See for instance, Nisormamad Shakarmamadov, Nazardod Jonboboev, *La'li kuhsor* ed., (Khorog, 2003); and Shakarmamadov, Nisor. *Ostonho-osori ta'rikh wa farhangi mardum: tadqiqi ziyoratgohoi kuhistoni Badakhshon* (Khorog, 2010) and his *Sunnathoi Nawruzi dar Badakhshon* (Dushanbe, 2011). The data based on oral history in these studies indicates how widespread shrine visitation and worship were among the population in this province. The archives under study provide a list of the main sacred places in the province, indicating that most of them had turned into ruins.

[53] For details of the observation of funeral rites in different Muslim-populated republics and *oblast*s of the former USSR, see *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London, 2000), pp. 509-549.

the archives under study do not reveal any data about discussions or disputes that may have occurred between Sunni *mullo*s in conducting funeral-related rituals in this province. What was considered detrimental about the funerals among the Sunni population in Murgab district was the feast expenses and animal slaughter. In addition to this a custom known as *isqot* or *khairiyot* (distributing the property of the dead by the *mullo*s among the Kyrgyz Sunni population) was denounced and banned by the authorities. The number of annual reports on the two Muslim festivals exceeded those on life-cycle rituals. In the case of funerals among the Ismailis, these reports provided more detailed information about the ceremony itself, including the differences in practice, the recitation of religious texts and prayers and the activity of religious figures. The commissioners described different forms of prayers conducted by the Sunni Muslim population, such as the *namozi id*, *tarobeh*, *khatm-i Qur'on* and the *jum'a namoz* (the Friday prayer) and gatherings at the end of festivals. Nevertheless, apart from providing a short sample of a daily prayer, there is no detailed description of the kinds of prayer or religious discussion that took place.

In the case of the *charogh-i rawshan* or *da'wat*, the archives provide fairly good summaries of the text of *charogh-noma* the prayers and the content of some of the *maddoh*s sung during the three days of the funeral. There were different samples of the texts of) the *charogh-noma* or *qandil-noma* (book of the candle/lamp) used by the Ismailis during the performance of the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan.* It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a textual analysis of these samples of *charogh-noma* or the content of the various prayers recited during the festivals.[54] What is relevant for this thesis is to analyse the practice of the funeral rites in the light of changing religious policy, the continuous administrative interference and pressure, and atheist propaganda during the Soviet period. In the case of *charogh-i rawshan* or *da'wat* it is important to examine how this ceremony provided a space for religious figures to extend their influence among the believers, and served as a means of spreading religious views and transmitting Islamic knowledge in an environment dominated by widespread atheist propaganda.

The CARC documents reveal the disputes and rivalries among the Ismaili clergy in leading funerals which suggest how important this ceremony was for connecting the individual to

[54] For the analysis of the various sources and origin of this ritual, see Umed Muhammadsherzodshoev, *Manobe'i sunnati charoghrawshan* (Dushanbe, 2009) and for a detailed description of this ritual in English, see H. Elnazarov, 'The Luminous Lamp: The Practice of *Chiragh-i Rawshan* among the Ismailis of Central Asia', in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, ed., *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law* (forthcoming).

religion.[55] In this period it seemed that the ritual of *da'wat* was used less for following the religious path *per se* than for strengthening religious identity.

In the years of the Stalinist concession to religion in the mid-1940s, not only were the rites resumed but ceremonies such as the *da'wat* were used for summoning people to support the Soviet front.[56] By the early 1950s, however, the authorities again resumed their strict monitoring of religious activity, with the council instructing its commissioner to provide detailed description of each religious figure and the rituals practiced by Muslim communities, down to and including every life-cycle ritual celebrated within Muslim families in Gorno-Badakhshan. Following instructions from the council, the commissioner Bodurov reported instances of dispute and tension between religious figures, ordinary Ismailis, and the authorities, concerning their conduct of the rituals of *charogh-i rawshan* and *tasbeh* at funerals in the 1950s.

This detailed information on funerals even listed how many instances of *da'wat*s were held by *khalifa*s for members of the Communist Party and Soviet officials. This is what the council needed in order to measure the rise and fall of religiosity among the Ismailis, for which funeral related rites served as the best benchmark. However, reading between the lines of the report on *da'wat* we can sense the emerging rivalry between the Ismaili *khalifa*s and *mullo*s over the religious market in the relatively free milieu for religious activity from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s. For instance, the commissioner Bodurov reported that during a funeral in the city of Khorog, a *mullo*, who himself had grown up in a *detdom* (orphanage) complained about the *khalifa*s that had *kamsawod* (poor knowledge). This *mullo* had reportedly pointed out that the Islamic rites had been reformed by the Prophet Muhammad and the Shi'i Imams. It was therefore inappropriate for the *khalifa*s to allow animal slaughter, and perform the *charogh-i rawshan* during funerals. Instead, the *mullo* supported the ritual of *tasbeh* which was less expensive and requested the *wakili din* (representative for religious affairs) i.e., the commissioner to prohibit *da'wat.*[57]

---

[55] See for instance Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London, 2000) and, more recently Kristztina Kehl-Bodrogi, *Religion is Not So Strong Here: Muslim Religious Life in Khorezm after Socializm* (Berlin, 2008), indicating the centrality of the funeral in religious life in the context of Soviet suppression of religion.

[56] See notes on how Ismaili *khalifa* used *da'wat* to summon people to support the Soviet army during the Second World War, in Khayolbek Dodikhudoev, *Philosophiia krestianskogo bunta (O roli srednevekovogo Ismailizma v razvitii svobodomysliia na musul'manskom vostoke)* (Dushanbe, 1987), p. 38.

[57] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, p. 80, (9 April 1952).

Instances of *da'wat* during funerals were also monitored by rural *aktivs* in each village who were there to also report on the activities of the *mullohoi namoyoni din* (notable religious figures), the *khalifa*s and religious teachers. In their reports the commissioners had to indicate cases when funerals or any other rites were performed by clerics not officially designated as *khalifa*s (for the Ismailis) or *mullos* (for the Sunnis).

Religious activities had been subject to strict monitoring and control since the establishment of Soviet rule. What made it different in the period under study was the way in which these activities were regulated by the council and its commissioners on the ground. Moreover, the consequences of this monitoring were not as catastrophic for believers as they had been in the 1930s. In the 1930s the Soviet government banned the *khalifa*s to conduct religious rites at funerals. Thus some *khalifa*s had had to hide their participation in funeral rituals and performing the *charogh-i rawshan* at the houses of the deceased.[58]

Funeral-related rituals were monitored because of a number of relevant points of Soviet religious policy in the post-war period. First of all funeral related rites were deemed detrimental for the household economy, due to their huge expenses, the wastage of food and the sacrificing of animals. Secondly, the funeral was an occasion that enabled *khalifa*s and *mullo*s to extend their zone of activity by travelling from their own village to neighbouring ones to perform funeral rites for their relatives. Thirdly, a funeral lasted for a few days with people visiting the family to offer prayers for the deceased. Like everywhere in the Muslim world, it served as the most appropriate occasion for clergy and believers to express their sense of belonging to a religious community, kinship and solidarity. Last and not least, for the Ismailis the ritual of *da'wat* at the end of funerals played a vital role in

[58] Stories of clandestine religious rituals and persecution of the *khalifa*s and other individuals for attending the *charogh-i rawshan* during the years of repression in 1930s are widespread among the Ismailis of Badakhshan. Archival materials from the 1930s also confirm the cases of persecution and the sentencing of *khalifa*s and other religious figures for performing the *charogh-i rawshan.* For more examples, see articles by T.S. Kalandarov, 'Religiia v zhizne Pamirtsev XX veka' pp. 24-51 and E. Hojibekov, 'Repressiia 30-X godov XX veka i Ismaility Badakhshana', pp. 101-111 in N. Emel'ianova ed., *Pamirskaia ekspeditsiia* (Moscow, 2006). A recent collection of archival documents and newspaper articles by Qurbon Alamsho, *Pomir 1937* (Dushanbe, 2012), also contains many interesting and important details of religious figures, ritual performance, biographies of the notable Soviet Tajik officials from Gorno-Badakhshan, and various other individuals who were persecuted, jailed and were executed in 1930s.

transmitting religious knowledge through the recitation of the *charogh-noma*, the performance of *maddohkhoni* and discussion of religious themes.

The number of mourners and the standard of performance of the *da'wat* and *charogh-i rawshan* depended on how much authority the dead person had enjoyed or how established his/her family was. Obviously the death of a respected or young person brought more people to the funeral, to mourn, pray and participate in the *da'wat* ceremony. In 1952 Bodurov reported the death of the *ishan* Sayyidkozum Sayidfarrukhshoev. The *kolkhoz* members used to visit this *ishan* during his lifetime. During the funeral and the *da'wat* approximately 400 *kolkhoz* members and even rural *aktiv*s, visited his house over three to four days. The commissioner himself visited the family members on the first day and reported on the active participation of the leading *khalifa*s in performing funeral rites at the house.[59] In the same year Bodurov reported that the chairman of a *kolkhoz* in the village of Tawdem in the Shugnan district held a lavish funeral ceremony on the death of his father. The ceremony lasted for four days during which religious figures allowed *maddohkhoni* and conducted the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* at the end. A young *mullo* reportedly criticised such an expensive and long ritual.

Subsequently, Bodurov received dozens of reports from *aktivi dini* about the *da'wati namoyon* (lavish summoning ceremony) lead by *khalifa*s even for the family of party members and officials.[60] For instance, in the same year it was reported that a member of the *kolkhoz* in the village of Mun in the Shugnan district held a *da'wati namoyon* at the funeral of his mother, in which more than a hundred people, including 50 *Sufi*s and several *maddohkhon*s participated. Over the three days a bull and a sheep were slaughtered and 60 kilograms of wheat were used for preparing food for visitors. Another such instance of *da'wat* with *maddohkhoni* was organised by the secretary of the Communist Party in a *sel'sovet* in the Shugnan district for the funeral of his daughter.[61]

[59] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 2, (11 April 1952), pp. 42-43.

[60] *Aktiv* in the CARC reports refers to the Communist Party activists in the districts and villages that were monitoring and informing the party and security officials about vital events unfolding in the lives of the inhabitants of particular localities.

[61] *Sufii din* in the archives under study does not refer to the individuals that were following a particular Sufi order, but regularly to those participating actively in the ceremony of *da'wat*. The commissioners classified various religious figures as *sufii din*, as *mullo*, *janozagar*, *maddoh*, *otun*, as healers and *shaman*s without clarifying their role, clear function and the strata of population to which that they belonged. It should be also

The commissioner Bodurov pointed out the growing numbers of followers of the *tasbeh* ritual and the increasingly frequent disputes between them and those following the existing *da'wat* ceremony. He reported an instance when the director of an evening educational course in the city of Khorog, himself a party *aktiv*, asked the *khalifa* to conduct the ritual of *tasbeh* at the funeral of his father. On the final night of the funeral a dispute took place between various *mullo*s, *sufi*s, and the *janozagars* (those reciting the funeral prayer) who were followers of both the *tasbeh* and the *charogh-i rawshan* rituals in his house. In this dispute a *mullo* from Khorog, Bandishoev Imatsho reportedly considered the ritual of *tasbeh* as a custom of the *chor-yoris.*[62] According to this *mullo* the Ismailis needed to perform the *charogh-i rawshan* in order to lead the soul of the dead into paradise, whereas there was no benefit for the soul from performing the ritual of *tasbeh*. This *mullo* reportedly viewed people as deluded to use the *tasbeh* as it was not their traditional rite even if it was approved by the Soviet officials. Despite this dispute the director requested the *khalifa* to end the funeral with the ritual of *tasbeh.*

A similar dispute between *sufis* and *mullo*s was reported at the funeral of a party member in upper part of Khorog. On that occasion it was reported that *sufis* and *mullo*s such as Sulaimonov Abdurahmon, who was also an employee of *raifo* (the district funding office); *mullo* Bandishoev Imatsho; the official *khalifa* Metarshoev Aynalisho and another *mullo* Muborakqadamov Berd, all proponents of *charogh-i rawshan*, described the *tasbeh* as the rite belonging to the *madhab* (school) of those who followed the *shar'ria*. Even if the family had initially preferred the ritual of *tasbeh*, the funeral ended with *da'wat-i charogh.*[63] In the 1950s there were many disputes and tensions when a *khalifa* did not agree to perform *tasbeh* at the house of certain individuals, especially party members and officials. Similarly there were cases when a *khalifa* himself following the *tasbeh* ritual would complain about the interference of *mullo*s performing the *charogh-i rawshan*.

In 1953 Bodurov wrote a letter to his senior colleague in the republic to ask for guidance especially about this dispute, i.e. on which groups of Ismailis the CARC representative in the *oblast* could rely for his work. He also asked for solutions to a number of questions that

---

noted that the texts of the *charogh-noma* recited in a *da'wat* mentioned the names of known Sufi figures from the past.

[62] *Choryoris*: from Tajik *Chahor Yor*, (literary four companions), i.e. those who follow the four rightly-guided caliphs of Islam i.e., Abu Bakr, Uthman, Umar and 'Ali.

[63] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1 d. 2, (29 April 1952). pp. 81-88.

emerged from his work with the believers in the *oblast*. These were questions about: a) how to deal with the *khalifa*s (Ismailis) and *mullo*s (Sunnis) who were acting beyond the confines of legislation; b) Whether the representative could rely on the support of the clergy; and c) How to obtain information from remote areas where there were no *aktiv*s. Bodurov also pointed out the shortcomings of atheist propaganda among the population which in turn enabled the religious figures to revive their activity. Therefore, he further asked if he was allowed to raise this issue in the meeting with the *aktiv*s or conduct propaganda himself. The other questions were linked to his position as a party bureaucrat, such as: How could he reply to the criticism of his work in meetings with the *aktiv*s? And what could the commissioner do if the local officials did not provide support to him, especially sending him the personal details of the *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and those practicing prayers (*namozkhon*s) in the remote areas. These issues, noted Bodurov, made his task more difficult.[64]

There was no immediate response by the CARC commissioner in the republic, as well as the provincial authorities regarding the questions that Bodurov rose above. However, reviewing Bodurov's report, the council in Moscow instructed him to record details about the level of religiosity, ritual performance and the activities of the Ismaili clergy. Although there was no specific recommendation on how to deal with the two different groups, the council made it clear that the commissioner should not interfere in the believers' decision:

> The council instructs you to take into account the fact that struggling against religion is not your responsibility. It is also not permitted for you to interfere in the appointment and dismissal of ministers of religion. It is not clear why believers and the clergy complain to you or consult with you on such matters. The council is satisfied with the account that you provided about *mazor*s, a task which you need to carry out further and update in your records. Even though there are no registered religious societies in Gorno-Badakshan and yet the levels of religiosity remain high, it is wrong to prohibit the believers from worshipping. Such unnecessary action would not yield any results except an increase in the cases of disagreement and unhealthy sentiment among the believers.[65]

These instructions not to interfere in the appointment of clergy and not to prohibit the performance of any kind of rituals also meant that the commissioner should not take the side of either of the two groups of Ismailis. Subsequently, when the disputes emerged between the religious figures and groups of believers about rituals, the commissioner

[64] GA GBAO, f.110, op. 1, d. 2, see letter from Bodurov to Hamidov, (26 February 1953), pp. 109-110.

[65] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. l, 'Perepiski s soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov SSR', (27 August 1954), p. 68.

instructed them to consider the wishes of all believers and act within the Soviet legislation on religion. According to a letter dated 29 July 1954, from the *khalifa* Mizrobshoev in the Suchon village of Shugnan district, the Ismailis in this *kolkhoz* were divided into two groups and had dispute with each other over funeral rites. One group followed the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* or *da'wat-i charogh*, which included the recitation of the *charogh-noma* religious poem and the lighting of a candle made from the fat of the sacrificed sheep. The other group followed the ritual of *tasbeh* (prayer with beads) while reciting the text of the *Pir-i Shoh* prayer that was introduced among the Ismailis of Badakhshan by the Panjabhai missionaries in the 1920s.[66] In contrast to the ritual of *da'wat-i charogh,* which was described by the commissioner as a large ceremony for spreading religious views, the ritual of *tasbeh* was a simplified religious performance. As a result of this intra-Ismaili dispute, when the *khalifa* conducted the rite of *tasbeh* the group which followed the old rite i.e. the *da'wati charogh,* during the funeral, would make their objections known.

The CARC commissioner used the term *staroobriiadtsi* for the Ismailis who performed the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan*. In contrast he applied the term *novoobriiadtsi* to the group of the Ismailis who practiced the rite of *tasbeh*.[67] Nevertheless, commissioner Bodurov did not explain how the dispute among Ismailis could be described using terminology applied to the Christian population in the Soviet Union. It would appear that the commissioner simply used terminology familiar to the CARC experts in Moscow. As for the *khalifa* Mizrobshoev, he wanted to take it upon himself to perform the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan.* This view was shared by the rural activists who also recommended conducting the old rite during funerals. Despite this, the *khalifa* raised the issue of disputes over ritual performance with the commissioner Bodurov:

[66] The commissioners recorded a short sample of the prayer of *Pir-i Shoh* recited as the *tasbeh* (beads) are counted. See for instance examples of excerpts from this prayer in GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 'Religioznaia obstanovka v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtanomnoi Oblasti', (16 February 1974), pp. 2-5.

[67]*Staroobriiadtsi*: from Russian 'Old Believers'. These were the followers of the Russian Orthodox Church who 1652-58 rejected the reforms of the Patriarch of Moscow, Nicon, who ordered them to emulate the practice and textbooks of the Greek Church in Russia. The *raskol* (schism) in the Russian Church splitted the Old Believers from the official church headed by Patriarch Nicon. *Novoobriiadtsi*: from Russian 'New Believers'. These were the people who accepted the reforms and were considered more westernised in comparison to the Old Believers. For more on the history of relations between the Russian Pravoslav Church and the Soviet State, see Gerd Shtrikker, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia tserkov' v Sovetskoe vremia (Materialy dokumenty po istorii otnoshenii mezhdu gosudarstvom i tserkov'iu (1917-1991).*

Mizrobshoev: Would you as the CARC *upolnomochennyi* (commissioner) in Gorno-Badakhshan recommend providing support for the *staroobriiadtsi* i.e., those following the old ritual of *da'wat* during funerals?

Bodurov: You as a *khalifa* represent a religious society and conduct rites, which are permitted by the Soviet legislation. This law should be maintained and in case it is violated, the state will take measures against it. You have to have dignity and also work according to the wishes of the believers of the *tasbeh* group. Neither you nor I introduced the *tasbeh* ritual, but it has existed since 1923. As for obliging believers to conduct the ceremony of *charogh-i rawshan*, it is not allowed to advocate it; maybe some believers do not want to observe it. Therefore, it is not allowed to oblige them.[68]

Generally, the appearance of these kinds of disputes and disagreements over the performance of rituals between the clergy and believers can be related to the relatively free milieu of the 1950s. It seems that the group defined as *novoobriadtsi*, although small, was favoured by the local authorities, but those labelled as *staroobriiadtsi*, especially the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s, were depicted as exploiters who abused the material and spiritual interests of believers during funerals. It was apparent that the commissioners pointed out that the ritual of *tasbeh* was simpler, less expensive and less effective for preaching.[69] When reporting on disputes about the funeral rites, the CARC commissioner often indicated that the *da'wat* had powerful role in spreading religious propaganda.

In the context of the Soviet anti-religious policy and continuous atheist propaganda, performing the *da'wat* that drew people to religion raised more concerns than the short, basic, ritual recitation of *tasbeh*. Despite this, the local authorities could not prevent the performance of the ritual of the *charogh-i rawshan* or replace it with the *tasbeh* ritual. What was costly though was the loss of jobs and future careers within the system for some officials and party members who allowed the *da'wat* or *charogh-i rawshan* ceremony to be conducted at the funeral of one of their family members. For instance, on January 1955 Bodurov reported about the funeral of the son of the provincial prosecutor at which more than four hundred people gathered. Initially, the *khalifa* and other family members decided to conduct the ceremony of *da'wat.* When the father of the dead boy, the provincial prosecutor, arrived late he did not allow the family and the *khalifa* to hold the ceremony of

[68] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 4, 'Svedeniia zapisei priiomov dukhovenstva i veruiushikh za vtoroe polugodie 1954 goda po GBAO', (1 January 1955), p. 25.

[69] It was noted that some officials attempted to ban the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan* and replace it with the ritual of *tasbeh*. See, *Razdelenie Badakhshana,* pp. 103-105. However, as can be seen, the council in Moscow did not recommend that its commissioner should take the side of those conducting the ritual of *tasbeh*.

da'wat at his house. The prosecutor told them that he was a party *aktiv* and did not recognize religious practices. The *mullo*s in turn spread rumours about this prosecutor considering him an impostor and insinuated that soon their children would become unbelievers by studying in Soviet schools.[70]

The reports under study remain almost silent on whether the CARC commissioners offered protection to some party members who were accused of assisting religious figures and participating in religious rituals. The general rule of the state was that official and party members were excluded from the category of the population defined as believers. In reality, however, this was far from being the case with the officials in Muslim-populated republics, with religion being at the heart of the life-cycle rituals such as circumcision, marriage and death. Party members were themselves subject to pressure from their colleagues and the party committee, for participating in religious rituals. From the 1960s to mid 1980s, the archives rarely mention disputes and tension between Ismailis in performing rituals. As an analysis of the CARC documents has revealed, religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan were aware of this freedom afforded to religious activity by the Soviet state.

The appointment of the special commissioner for religious affairs in the province in turn gave *khalifa*s and *mullo*s an opportunity to discuss religious issues with him, denounce each other to the authorities and to vie for position. According to the Soviet legislation, the commissioners like any other party members were not allowed to participate in any religious event. In practice, however the commissioners could not isolate themselves from the events in their communities, such as wedding and funerals, which draw together all Muslim people, party members, religious figures and believers.

The performance of most rituals in the family space in some areas of Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus gave ground for the argument about the domestication of religion. For instance, in her observation of religious practices in Soviet Azerbaijan and Georgia, Dragadze stressed the continuation of the domestication of religion up until *perestroika* in the mid-1980s. She gives an example of how villagers preferred to perform rituals for their dying relatives at home rather than in hospital.[71] This idea about the domestication of Islam

[70] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 4, 'Informatsionnaia zapiska. O deiatel'nosti dvizheniia religioznykh Musul'manskikh grup veruiushikh Ismailitov', (18 February 1955), p. 38.

[71] Tamara Dragadze, 'The Domestification of Islam under Soviet Communizm', in C. M. Hann, *Socialism, Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice* (Abingdon, 1993), pp. 141-151.

seemed to have been informed more by the theoretical concepts stressing the division between profane and sacred spaces, and public and domestic spheres. In the context of this study, the blurred lines dividing religious life into public and private spheres were not clarified. Examples like this suggested little about the domestication of religion, especial when applied to Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan.

Funeral related rituals in the context of the Tajik SSR involved not only immediate family members but also relatives and the wider community. Funerals and burial ceremonies formed a public space in the Muslim populated areas of the USSR, in which party officials, heads of the *kolkhoz*es participated together with religious figures and the ordinary people in rituals. [72] Similarly as Abashin's study reveals in different Muslim-populated regions of Central Asia, there were distinct social relations and governing orders, practices and negotiations in a milieu defined as an 'informal public sphere.'[73] In rural areas, private houses were turned into spaces for the observation of communal rites, for instance, during the *da'wat* among the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan. Funeral prayers were even held in registered and unregistered mosques in the Tajik SSR. The number of people attending mosque for prayers after the funeral also contradicts the idea that religious rituals were practiced only in the domestic sphere.[74]

4.4. Muslim Perception of New Soviet Rituals

In order to find alternatives to existing religious rituals, the Soviet state introduced secular rituals such as patriotic celebrations on the anniversary of the October Revolution, International Women's Day, Labour Day and Victory Day, which were common to all of its citizens. In the Tajik SSR, some temporary seasonal festivals such as the Harvest Festival and the Melon and Watermelon Festival were introduced. The celebration of the traditional New Year's festival of Nawruz was also allowed to be celebrated from 1976.[75]

[72] For a more detailed analysis of how Muslims in different parts of the USSR used various public places and spaces in *kolkhoz*es for practicing their religious rituals, see Stephane Dudoignon and Christian Noack, ed., *Allah's Kolkhozes: Migration, de-Stalinization, Privatisation and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s-2000s)* (forthcoming).

[73] See Sergei Abashin, 'A Prayer for Rain: Practicing Being Soviet and Muslim', *Journal of Islamic Studies* (2014), pp. 1-23.

[74] Archival reports point to increased visitation of shrines and mosque attendance in the period under study.

[75] *The Subtlest Battle*, p. 50.

In 1972 the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan formed a commission of 11 individuals to implement the newly conceptualised Soviet rituals, a mix of existing seasonal and life-cycle celebrations. These rituals signalled important transitions on the path of life, education and career, and were comprised of: registration of birth, graduation from secondary school, achieving Komsomol and party membership, seeing off youngsters to join the Soviet Army, retirement, civil funerals and a number of other civil rituals. The new Soviet rituals were intended gradually to replace the existing religious rites of *nikoh* (marriage ceremony), *janoza* (funeral), and other religious festivals. [76]

In that year, it was reported that the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan had organised extensive seminars for the chairs of the assistance commission of the *ispolkom* of the city of Khorog. In this seminar all the heads of the provincial party government units, the prosecutor, the head of the internal affairs unit, the teachers union, the agricultural department, the head of the Komsomol unit, the culture unit, the cinema service and the *Znanie* society, participated; altogether comprising 95 people. The seminar addressed the following tasks and issues concerning the atheist upbringing of workers: the ideological prerequisites for educating the population, improving the culture and lifestyle of the workers, the role of the administrative authorities in "the struggle against remnants of the past" and compliance with the legislation.

Each of these issues was discussed in detail in speeches by the secretary of the *obkom*, the party, the head of the department of culture, deputy prosecutors, the judiciary and chairmen of the assistance commissions in the town and districts. The CRA commissioner Nayimov presented a talk on the role of the assistance commissions in implementing the new Soviet rituals. While at this seminar the provincial authorities called for the introduction of new civil rituals, in districts such as Qal'a-i Khumb the problems of registration had not even been solved yet.[77] Therefore, the *oblispolkom* ordered the chairman of the *ispolkom* of this district immediately to submit all completed applications for the registration of religious figures.[78]The *oblispolkom* also ordered the commissioner Nayimov, to review the work of the commissions on the implementation of the new Soviet rituals. In response to the decisions and orders of the *oblispolkom*, on 25 October 1972 he pointed out that most of

[76] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 22, (29 August 1972), pp. 1-9.

[77] Ibid., pp. 6-9.

[78] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 22, see the decision of the GBAO's *oblispolkom* from 25 October 1972, pp. 10-15.

the *ispolkom*s of the districts had been successful in implementing state religious policy. Nevertheless in district such as Qal'a-i Khumb, the social commissions under the *ispolkom* were not conducting a sufficient analysis of the views and movements of religious figures.[79]

The atheist policy was continuously adapted to the needs and circumstances of each of the religious groups, especially in the Muslim areas where religion maintained a strong influence.[80] To solve the problem of weak atheist propaganda in this province, the *Znanie* society reportedly dispatched its key lecturers from the judiciary, the central province hospital and the teacher-training institute to the districts of Wanj, Qal'a-i Khumb and Murgab. The themes of these lectures ranged from the 'damage' caused by religious practices, the inferior role of women in Islam and the denunciation of the reactionary role of religion.

The commissioner himself travelled to a number of districts to provide practical support for the work of the commissions under the *ispolkom*s on the eve of the month of Ramazon and published an article in the regional newspaper on the damage caused by *ruza*. From the mid-1960s onwards the regional newspaper *Badakhshoni Soveti* and the district newspapers increased their coverage of atheist and scientific themes by highlighting Soviet developments in medicine, technology and space exploration. Articles criticising and mocking the practice of healing through *azoim-khoni* (healing through prayer) and amulets regularly appeared in the press and on local radio broadcasts.[81]

In spite of these efforts, the CRA commissioner noted that the *ispolkom*s of some districts such as Qal'a-i Khumb were not providing details about fasting and other religious customs but reported on the general activities of the *Znanie* society instead. The social commissions in other districts remained merely names on paper without any activity such as holding meetings or reporting. For this reason Nayimov pointed out that the *ispolkom*s of the district undermined the recommendations issued by the *oblispolkom* about the new

[79] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 22, 'Prilozhenie k reshenie ispolnitel'nogo komiteta soveta deputatov trudiashikhsia GBAO, N. 37 ot 25 Oktiabria 1972 g', (25 October 1972), p. 13.

[80] Yaakov Ro'i, 'The Task of Creating the New Soviet Man: Atheistic Propaganda in the Soviet Muslim Areas', *Soviet Studies*, 36 (1984), pp. 26-44.

[81] For instance, in each of their annual reports the commissioner listed several polemical and propagandist articles that appeared in the local press, where the author, atheist experts and even religious figures denounced the practice of *ruza*, sacrifices, healing and funerary rituals.

rituals and ensuring compliance with the legislation. However, it appeared that this criticism of the work of the *ispolkom*s and the commissions was merely a bureaucratic exercise for the commissioners. They stressed in each report the success and shortcomings of the atheist propaganda in a similar manner. In his criticism of the work of the *ispolkom*s and related commissions, the CRA commissioner even went so far as to state that there was insufficient information on some illegal practices, such as circumcision.

In 1973 the party *obkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan, together with the *Znanie* society, officials of the *aktiv*s and ideological workers held another conference where the following presentations were made: a) the work of a public organisation in implementing the new rituals, given by the deputy of the *oblispolkom* Qadamshoeva; b) the reactionary essence of religious customs and ways to overcome them, by the head of the culture department comrade Mirzoshoev; c) the decrees of the Congress of the Communist Party for educating workers, by head of provincial education unit, Faqirov; and d) freedom of conscience and conducting atheist propaganda by the CRA commissioner, Nayimov.[82]

In her presentation the deputy chair of the *oblispolkom*, Qadamshoeva, pointed out that religious figures were adapting themselves to the new situation and wished to accept civil ceremonies. However, she claimed that the *mullo*s were making money by visiting people's houses for prayer and healing, while the community incurred huge expenses on food, sacrificing animals for funerals and religious holidays. The participation of children in the ritual of the *charogh-i rawshan* at funerals was considered against the legislation and had to be banned. Similarly the practice of circumcision was considered by the authorities as a criminal act as result of which children could become infected and need hospital treatment.

The deputy also called on the local party officials and the intelligentsia to extend their support to the related social and public commissions to ensure compliance with the law on religion. Going further, the deputy chair pointed out that in recent years religious figures had tried to celebrate rituals on different dates for their own ends. She referred to stories about the religious figures from Roshtqal'a, who had complained that '*Nawruz* (the spring holiday) was celebrated on the same day everywhere, and the *khalifa*s will have no effect on the followers'. Another story that she retold was about the *mullo*s of Khorog who stated that 'they could not conduct religious rites during the celebration of *Nawruz*, and therefore the people should only celebrate the festivals of *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon*'. As these

[82] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 9, (11 February 1974), p. 10.

two religious festivals were not celebrated in many villages, the influence of the religious figures was therefore weakened among the population. The celebration of the harvest was highlighted as a successful example of the new Soviet rituals in the *kolkhoze*s where it was accompanied by music, sport games (wrestling, *buzkashi* and running), a market and an exhibition of agricultural products.

In order to implement the new Soviet rituals, special ritual committees were organised under the *ispolkom* of each district and town. In her speech the deputy of the *oblispolkom* stressed the need for managing graves and *grazhdanskaia panikhida* (civil funeral rites). The committee for implementing the new Soviet rituals needed to arrange new areas for burials in various locations with facilities for washing and erecting a headstone with the family name, a black and white portrait of and the dates of birth and death of the deceased. Generally the procedure for new civil funeral rites did not specifically point to the banning of *janoza*, or other religious rites. However, in her speech the deputy of the chairman of *oblispolkom* noted that it was recommended that family members of a deceased person should immediately inform the committee members to arrange the *grazhdanskaia panikhida*. These committee members should carry out the registration of the death, and appoint a date, place and transport for the funeral. During the funeral according to the civil ceremony the practice of religious rites and the spending of large sum of money were discouraged.[83]

The aforementioned conference was followed by a regional seminar in September 1973 where chairmen of the social assistance commissions under the *ispolkom*s reported on their work of monitoring the activity of religious figures, especially on the eve of religious festivals.[84] Subsequently, such meetings and seminars undertook detailed assessments of the process of implementing atheist propaganda and the new rituals with the assistance commissions under the *ispolkom*s. The job of the CRA commissioner then shifted to providing guidance, presenting talks on general political and ideological themes such as class consciousness, scientific and atheistic ideas, and reviewing the work of the social commissions.

Unlike the performance of the new Soviet rituals, the purpose of which was continuously stressed as being the duty of all citizens, the traditional religious rituals were considered to be a matter of respect, honour and obligation. For instance, one of the *khalifa*s who often

[83] GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 545, (5 September 1975), p. 124.

[84] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 9, (11 February 1974), p. 10.

features in the reports, Sobirov Ghulomnabi, complained to the chairman of the assistance commission and the *sel'sovet* about people's attitude to celebrating the new Soviet rituals. In this *khalifa*'s view, when celebrating the new Soviet rituals such as seeing off the youngsters to the Soviet Army, house-warmings and birthday parties, people became unfriendly due to the excessive use of vodka that led to disputes and fighting, even between relatives. The *khalifa*s were often not invited to these celebrations. Sobirov further stated that religion was not an obstacle to the actions of the state, justifying it by the Prophetic tradition that says 'government is a shadow of God on the earth.' Furthermore, this *khalifa,* like the rest of his fellow clergy, praised the Soviet state's efforts to improve people's standard of living by providing pensions to the elderly and support for families with many children. This *khalifa* did not acknowledge that he accepted payment for conducting religious rituals. He complained about a group of *mullo*s, his rivals in the village of Porshnev, who were conducting religious rituals without his agreement.[85]

The official *khalifas* and *mullo*s were not the only source of information about the religious situation in their localities, or even their own activities. Information came in from various sources on the ground, including the different *aktiv*s, members of the assistance commission, party and *kolkhoz* members, the community at large and those participating in religious ceremonies. Thus, even if the aforementioned *khalifa* denied that he had received payment for his services, it was reported through other channels that he was "conducting healing and practicing sorcery" among the population of his *sel'sovet.* It was reported that this *khalifa* collected money and animal skins, the *sina* (breast) of sacrificed lambs, and new fabrics and suits (worth 60-90 roubles) when leading the funeral ceremonies. This kind of payment to the registered *khalifa*s became a custom as believers and their households were keen to give generously to the *khalifa* or *domullo* in order to preserve the family's good reputation.[86] Obviously, these customs made huge demands on the family of the deceased and raised the concern of the officials and the members of the assistance commissions.

There were many cases where official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s were criticised and taxed more on money donations collected during religious festivals, and marriage and funeral ceremonies. This manner of conducting rituals by the *khalifa*s and *domullo*s was deemed by the Soviet government and Communist Party authorities to be an anti-social and illegal

[85] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (10 February 1971), p. 56.

[86] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (10 February 1971), p. 105.

activity that strengthened the influence of religion. In their view, religious rites rituals distracted Soviet citizens from being progressive, productive and enlightened. For their part, the religious figures also considered the newly-introduced Soviet rituals as occasions for encouraging immorality, spreading alcoholism, fighting and stirring up hostility, even among relatives.

Having observed all this, the CRA commissioner concluded that the increased activity of the *khalifa*s, and their influence on believers, especially during funerals, was related to the poor work of the social commissions in introducing the Soviet rituals. Nayimov noted that some of the social assistance commissions were inactive, as a result of which funerals and other events were left in the hands of the clergy. He quoted a *khalifa* from the *sel'sovet* of Wer in the Shugnan district who said:

> When someone dies, it does not matter whether he is a member of the *kolkhoz* or Soviet worker; the funeral is led by the *khalifa*s. If it is necessary to conduct an engagement ceremony, for whomsoever, then it will be conducted secretly, and even close relatives would not know about it.[87]

Nayimov therefore recommended strengthening the work of the social assistance commissions under the *ispolkom*s to implement the new Soviet rituals throughout the whole *oblast*. To what extent these new rituals were intended to replace the pre-existing religious practices can only be understood within the context of the larger socio-cultural, demographic and economic changes in the region during this period. The fact that the new Soviet rituals were widespread cannot be denied, but it was unlikely to be the case that they actually replaced the religious rituals.

The growing demand for performing religious rituals, especially *janoza* and *nikoh*, made it inevitable that the religious personnel would be active and undertake the dissemination of their ideas. Hence, the introduction of the new Soviet rituals cannot be seen merely as replacement of existing religious and cultural rituals, even if it was their stated aim. In her extensive analysis of Soviet rituals, Christel Lane points out that the implementation of Soviet rituals demonstrated the elite's drive to strengthen its rule over the public by means of new symbols and structures.[88]

The implementation of new Soviet rituals, involved a set of complex measures, including atheist propaganda and continuous criticism of the symbols and structure of religious

[87] Ibid., p. 107.

[88] See Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society-the Soviet Case* (Cambridge, 1981) pp. 252-284.

customs. This process itself suggests that the state, as represented by central policy makers, elites and the local organs of government, had to engage with the religious symbols and views that were being perpetuated by religious figures. In other words, the policy of making a distinction between secular state rites and religious customs involved these two categories in an intimate interaction with each other.

Conclusion

This examination of religious rituals and celebrations among the Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan reveals radical changes in the ways these continued to be practiced. In quantitative terms, the changes constituted a decrease in instances of the practice of *ruza,* communal prayers and shrine visitation among the Sunni and Ismaili population in Gorno-Badakhshan. The obvious causes for this decrease were the continuous administrative pressures and propaganda by various central and local party state organs and authorities. Generally, the decrease in the instances of ritual performance by Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan resembled that occurring in other parts of Tajik SSR and the Soviet Union. The striking difference, however, is that in other parts of Soviet Union, in particular in the Muslim-dominated republics of Central Asia, Islamic practices, especially communal prayers in registered and unregistered mosques, and mass visitation to popular sacred cites caused serious concern for the local and central authorities.[89]

In the context of Gorno-Badakhshan, there are no reports of instances of mass visitations undermining local government efforts to target religious activities. The reasons for these were the difficulties in reaching the remote and small villages. This absence of communal prayers and mass visitation in this province for much of the period under study does not suggest their total disappearance from the religious landscape. These practices continued to exist, in particular small group prayers among Sunni Muslims. Among the Ismailis, the communal performance of religious rituals was observed on the occasions of funerals as evidenced in the case of the reciting of the *charogh-noma* and *maddohkhoni* during the ceremony of *charogh-i rawshan* as part of funerals.

[89] For instances the cases of mass celebrations of *Id-i Qurbon, Id-i Ramazon* and shrine visitation delayed seasonal work in some parts of Tajikistan. Official institutions were not working due to the absence of the majority of their workers who travelled to registered mosques outside their area. For more details of instances, of mass celebrations of religious festivals interfering in the work *kolkhoze*s, factories and plants, see *Islam in the Soviet Union,* pp. 500-501.

These communal and individual instances of practicing religion mainly took place in private houses, which provided the space for the people to assemble during festivals and life-cycle events. Outside Gorno-Badakhshan, this space was provided by the registered and unregistered mosques. Private houses also served as space for the celebration of new Soviet civil rituals, on birthdays, weddings, graduation from school, enlisting and returning from military service and a number of other Soviet secular and political events. Contrary to religious rituals, most of these Soviet rituals were celebrated in public, in state-built cultural houses and school halls.

The data presented in this chapter show that the changes in the ritual performance during this period were not of content, but rather of form and location. Apart from the instance when some Ismailis started to recite new prayer texts, no other instances of change or reform in the content of existing religious texts were recorded by CARC commissioners. In the 1950s, ritual performance often became the locus and source of disputes among the Ismailis during funerals. Sunnis and Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan had different ways of performing the main religious rituals such as *nikoh* (matrimonial ceremony), funeral rituals, reciting prayers and observing religious festivals. The only religious practice that was common to both was faith-healing conducted by Ismaili *mullo*s in the Sunni-populated areas and vice versa. The reports of the CARC commissioners provide records of ritual performances that were more targeted by the authorities from 1959 to 1964. The local authorities instituted punitive measures against a number of religious figures and pressurized their family members who were working as party state officials. From the 1970s onwards, the archives tend to provide more records of the content of texts of prayers used by both the Sunnis and Ismailis and the views of the prominent *khalifa*s and *mullo*s.

This increase in the amount of information in the archives by 1980s suggests a serious attempt by the central state policy-makers to come to terms with religious rites. Obviously, this must have been in line with a general understanding among the Soviet researchers and policymakers to undertake a more in-depth analysis of religious life, rather than trying to highlight its disappearance. By stating the fact that religious situation in Muslim populated areas of the USSR were controlled by numerous unregistered *mullo*s the CRA commissioners' confirmed the failure of Soviet anti-religious and atheist policy.[90]

[90] See introduction to *Islam i Sovetskoe gosudarstvo(1944-1990). Sbornik dokumentov*, pp. 19-27.

The distinct ways of practicing religion among Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakhshan, however, challenged this effort by the central policy-makers to study Islam. First, the conceptual problem of studying religious life in different parts of Soviet Union existed in the terminology used by the council and its commissioners. As in many other parts of Soviet Union, the CRA commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan often used the word 'sect' to identify the two Muslim communities in this province.[91] Secondly, an analysis of the data suggests how confusing it was for the commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan to define the legality of ritual performance, in particular when the first commissioner asked the council to instruct him regarding the disputes that surfaced during Ismaili funerals.

Finally, the incomplete description of the content of rituals by commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan reveals the limits of their expertise. It can be also seen as part of their strategy to deliberately offer fragmented accounts of ritual performance, in order to conform to the demand of central policy that religious rites were diminishing among the Soviet citizens in this province. There is a difference in size and content of the information sent to Moscow and that preserved inside the files of CRA commissioners in the regional archive in Gorno-Badakhshan. The internal documents preserved in the files of the commissioners provide more detailed information on ritual performance. What was reported to Moscow was more a watered-down report about religious activities and practices.

To sum up, ritual performance in the period under study adjusted itself not only to ideological and administrative pressures but also to the changing socio-cultural and economic context. The practice of religious rituals did not provide a sense of solidarity and collectivity among the majority of population, especially the new Soviet generation in this province. It was the occasions of the initiation into Communist Party and its youth wing *Komsomol*, public holidays of the Workers' Solidarity on 1 May, Victory Day on 9 May and Anniversary of Great October Revolution on 7 November, which indeed involved both

[91] The word 'sect' in the CARC commissioners report also denotes 'non-Orthodox Christian denominations' in Soviet Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine. For a comparisons of how the word 'sect' was applied by the CARC commissioners to identify unregistered religious groups in the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Mari ASSR) in the Russian Federation, see Sonja Luehrmann, 'A Multireligious Region in an Atheist State: Uniowide Policies Meet Communal Distinctions in the Postwar Mari Republic', in Catherine Wanner, ed., *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (New York, 2012), pp. 272-301.

religious and secular-minded people in celebration, despite their different views.[92] However, adherence to the rites of *nikoh* and the funeral ceremony formed the common denominator of what constituted traditional Islamic values for the Muslim population, despite the different views of these practices held by the clergy and the local officials. Socio-economic stability and rising living standards in Soviet Badakhshan in return motivated various segments of society, including party elites, the intelligentsia and the workers in various fields, to spend more lavishly on both religious and secular rituals.

[92] For a detailed analysis of how ritual performance produced social stability and conformity in the Soviet society see, Thomas, O. Cushman, 'Ritual and Conformity in Soviet Society', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 2 (1986), pp. 162-180.

Chapter 5: Transmitting Islamic Knowledge

Introduction

This chapter examines religious education as one of the main components of religious life in Tajik SSR in the years from the 1950s to the mid-1980s. Looking at the events that unfolded in the lives of Muslim believers prior to the Second World War, it appears that this aspect of their religious life had undergone dramatic, interesting and important changes. Centuries-old traditional religious institutes, teachings and practices in places like Central Asia disappeared with the physical destruction of material and human resources by the Soviet government between the 1920s and 1940s. During the Second World War and in the post-war period, especially in the post-Stalinist era after 1953, religious teaching continued within the family and then spread to *hujra*s through a network of teachers and students. In the post-war period the Soviet government allowed the opening of an official *madrasa* in Bukhara and later an Islamic Institute in Tashkent (Uzbek SSR), which drew Muslim students from every part of the Soviet Union.[1]

Parallel to official Islamic education, religious teaching flourished in private and clandestine schools in spite of the continuous administrative pressure and in the face of atheist propaganda and the thrust of Soviet secular education which aimed to weaken the influence of religion. It was perhaps this clandestine nature of religious teaching that prevented the Soviet authorities from accurately measuring it,[2] and hence it is, not well documented in the archival reports under study.[3]

---

[1] For more on the instances of private and clandestine teaching exposed by the authorities in Tajikistan see Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 357-359; and for the transmission of learning from 1950 to 1991 through 'cells' (*hujra*s) and literary circles in the Tajik SSR, see Stephane A. Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)', *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80; and also a study by Abdullo Rahnamo, *Ulamoi Islomi dar Tojikiston* (Dushanbe, 2009).

[2] For instance, attending prayers during and on the eve the celebration of *Id-i Qurbon*, observing *ruza* (fasting) during *Id-i Ramazon*, performing rituals such as *khatm-i Qur'on* as well as shrine visitation were occasions for measuring the influence of religion among believers.

[3] Unlike the detailed annual report on the celebration of religious festivals and rituals, the reports by the representative of the CARC later the CRA only referred to the cases of illegal religious teaching when uncovered by the authorities. Some reports listed the titles of the religious books possessed by the religious *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and *okhon*s. This does not suggest that religious teaching ceased during this period. On the contrary, cases of illegal teaching were discovered in many parts of Tajikistan for which *mullo*s who were

The development of religious teaching in official educational centres and in informal circles in a milieu dominated by a secular state and atheistic education also makes it difficult to establish accurate facts about religious education in this period.[4] This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section gives an overview of official Islamic education in Soviet Central Asia and its implications for the Muslim community in Tajik SSR. The second section looks into spread of informal religious teaching through internal migration in the republic. The third section explores the context and content of religious teaching in the specific family *maktab*s, and in *hujra*s. The final section analyses the transmission of religious knowledge among the Ismaili population in Gorno-Badakhshan.

In the years after the Second World War there were only limited opportunities for a small portion of the Muslim younger generation in Tajik SSR to study Islam in formal and state-supervised centres of learning. In contrast, larger numbers of students and teachers benefitted from the evolution of religious education in private and family schools and an informal network of learning. Hence, the spread of religious teaching was not only related to the fact that there was a need for religious figures to lead the congregation at the mosques, or to perform basic religious rites for the community. The rise of religious teaching in the post-war period had more to do with existing practices of learning, traditions of transmission of religious knowledge and a worldview distinct from that of state secular and atheist dominated education.[5] As the analysis in this chapter reveals, the specialists in the field of religious teaching and its proponents made a clear distinction between their *'ilm* as the unique tradition and religious identity for the new generation and secular Soviet upbringing.

---

caught were given prison sentences. See *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 356-359; and also Arapov Dmitry Yu, *Islam i sovetskoe gosudarstvo (1944-1990. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2011).

[4] In addition to the limited information about clandestine religious education in the archival sources, it requires extended time to cross-check the information from oral interviews with the former students and teachers of private circles throughout various parts of Tajikistan.

[5] The term 'practice' in this chapter is not used in a limited sense of exercise or revising but in a broader sense of Bourdieu's theory of practice in the religious field. See Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (London, 2007). The evolving teaching practice in this period reveals a more complex set of activities and relations, traditions, manners and *habitus* of learning, the production of religious capital, transmitting religious knowledge through copying religious works and oral performance through network of teachers and students in the informal religious schools.

5.1. Official Islamic Education in Soviet Union

In 1946, SADUM was permitted to re-open the Mir Arab *madrasa* in Bukhara, Uzbek SSR which was then the only official *madrasa* for studying Islam in the Soviet Union. This *madrasa* initially accepted 26 students, but their numbers reached 65 in the academic year 1949-50. The 14 students from the Tajik SSR in that year were the second largest group after the 36 students from the Uzbek SSR. The *madrasa* had 74 students by 1953-54.[6] In that academic year, it was also estimated that 14 students from Tajikistan studied there. Four of them were enrolled in 1946 and completed the five years of study. Those enrolled later, in the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, were still completing their studies in 1954.[7] Subsequently, the number of students enrolled fell to seven and sometimes even fewer, few students from the Tajik SSR were accepted there for study.[8]

In the official reports, the educational attainment and standard of teaching in this *madrasa* were deemed low and the number of graduates decreased to only 85 students between 1945 and 1970, and 80 students reportedly dropped out of their studies.[9] In 1956 another *madrasa* was allowed to open in Tashkent (Uzbek SSR) to train cadres for registered mosques, but it was closed soon thereafter in 1961. By the beginning of the 1958-59, academic years there were 96 students in both of these *madrasa*s. A decade later in 1971, a more advanced centre for providing religious instruction for official religious figures, an Islamic Institute named after a theologian, Ismail al-Bukhari (810-870), was opened in Tashkent. The institute offered four years of study to Muslim students from all over of the USSR.[10] Most of the graduates of the Mir Arab *madrasa* continued their study at this

[6] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 162.

[7] See BMDJT. f. 1516, op.1, ed.khr.35, d. 6, 'Materialy kaziata po Tadzhikistanu', See the 'List of the students of Mir Arab *madrasa* in Bukhara, and also the list of the graduates of this school', (7 January 1954), p.53.

[8] In the 1966-67 academic year there were five students from the Tajik SSR in Mir Arab *madrasa.* See GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 92, (9 October 1967), pp. 1-11; There were six students from the Tajik SSR in 1968. GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d.197, (18 March 1967), p. 22, and seven students in 1971, see GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 311, (1 March 1971), pp. 8-22. Of the ten applicants from the Tajik SSR in the 1975-1976 academic year, only two were accepted. GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 934, (23 September 1975), p. 5.

[9] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 161-63.

[10] All of the three students from the Tajik SSR out of the first 21 graduates of this institute in 1975 were sent to work with the *qoziyot* office representing SADUM in Dushanbe. See GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d.735, (26 September 1975), p. 135.

institute for four more years to receive a higher theological degree and become religious scholars. Some of them were assigned to mosques as readers of the Qur'an. Others were appointed as *imom-khatib*s or ordinary official *imom*s.[11] Starting from the mid-1950s, a few graduates of this *madrasa* and those continuing their studies at the Tashkent Islamic Institute were sent to universities in Middle Eastern countries.[12] The total period of study at the Mir Arab *madrasa* was nine years, with the first four years being the *ibtido'i* (elementary) stage and other years being the *rushdi* (advanced) stage.[13]

The syllabus in the Tashkent Islamic Institute initially included the Uzbek and Arab languages, *hadith*, *tafsir* and *fiqh*, Islamic history, *akhlaq*, the Qur'an, Persian, mathematics, geography, the Soviet constitution and the history of the peoples of the USSR.[14] Since the standard of teaching and the quality of the curriculum were regarded as poor in the 1950s, SADUM asked the authorities to acquire books from abroad (Egypt).[15] As far as admissions were concerned, formal applications for admission to these official centres were submitted through SADUM and the three other spiritual directorates, particularly by recommendation from the offices of the *qoziyot*s and in each republic. In practice, admission to these centres was, however, related to the existing network of teachers and students. As the former secretary of the *qoziyot* office in the Tajik SSR, Khudoiberdi Egamberdiev mentioned that he first studied at informal school with one of the official clergy in the Tajik SSR who then helped him to enter the Mir Arab *madrasa*. Egamberdiev studied in the Mir Arab *madrasa* from 1964 to 1971 and was then appointed *imom* in Qaramishqor mosque, one of the registered Friday mosques in Dushanbe. In 1974, he was sent to study in Syria and upon his return worked at the office of the *qoziyot* of the Tajik SSR until his retirement.[16]

---

[11] James Thrower, 'Notes on Muslim Theological Education in the USSR in the 1980s', in Shirin Akiner (ed.), *Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia* (London, 1994), pp. 175-180.

[12] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 164.

[13] Ashirbek Muminov et al., 'Islamic Education in Uzbekistan', in Michael Kemper and Stephan Reichmuth, ed., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London, 2010), p. 251.

[14] See James Thrower, 'Notes on Muslim Theological Education in the USSR in the 1980s', in Shirin Akiner ed., *Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia* (London, 1994), pp. 175-198.

[15] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p.163.

[16] Interview with Khudoiberdi Egamberdiev (b. 1936) in the village Gullistion of the Rudaki district nearby Dushanbe (14 April 2011).

The reports by the CARC commissioner categorised religious figures in terms of the various levels of religious and secular education they had received. However, the categorisation of religious figures according to the three levels (primary, secondary and higher) remained confused. Until the 1960s, the primary level of religious education for religious figures seemed to have been defined based on their study in the family milieu and existing *maktab*s, and the intermediate level based on their study in a *madrasa* prior to the establishment of the Soviet government.

From the mid-1950s, the education levels were also considered, by the length of the clergy's service in the official mosques and for others based on their studies in the Mir Arab *madrasa*.[17] According to the statistical report, in 1954 there were 26 officially registered mosques in the Tajik SSR, one of which was later closed. 35 registered religious figures, including 12 *khatib*s, 19 *imom*s and 4 *shaykh*s were serving the congregations in these mosques.[18] In the first half of 1955, there were 29 registered mosques with 39 clerics. 25 of these Sunni clerics were described as *imom-khatib*s most of whom had served before the 1940s in these posts; nine as *imom*s and five as *shaykh*s.[19] By 1956, there were 30 registered mosques for the Sunni population in the Tajik SSR, with 41 registered clergymen. Among these clergy there were 26 *imom-khatib*s; 10 described as being 'other

[17] For more details about the numbers of clergy classified as having higher, secondary and primary education see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 67-68.

[18] Regarding their general or state provided educational degree it was indicated that only one *khatib* and two *imam*s had been to a primary state school. The rest of the clergy had not attained even that level of secular education. Nine of these *khatib*s had secondary and three higher-level religious education. Two *imam*s (in the mosques) had a higher level; ten had secondary and seven a primary level religious education. All four *shaykh*s in these registered mosques had received intermediate religious education. See BMDJT, f.1516., op.1, ed. xr. 32, d. 1, 'Statisticheskii otchet o zaregistrirovannykh religioznykh obshchestvakh, molitvennykh pomesheniiakh i sluzhitel'iakh kul'tov po Tadzhikskoi SSR', (28 June 1954), pp. 21-22.

[19] Seven of the *khatib*s had a higher level religious education, twelve had secondary and six had primary. Two of the *imam*s had intermediate and seven had just a primary level of religious education. Two of the *shaykh*s had intermediate or middle and three had primary level. Only one of the *khatibs* had completed primary level general state education, compared to eight of the *imam*s who had primary and one who had reached secondary level state secular education. Three of the *shaykh*s also had primary level secular education. See statistics about the registered religious society, buildings and their staff; see BMDJT, f. 1569, op.1 ed. xr. 47, d. 1, (16 February 1956), pp. 42-43.

kinds of clergy' and as *shaykh*s of Muslim shrines.[20] The majority of these *khatib*s and ordinary *imom*s were reported to have reached secondary, and some even higher, levels of religious education.[21] As the figures in the box below show, the numbers of registered mosques had increased to 33 in 1957. 43 religious figures, including 28 *khatib*s, 10 ordinary *imom*s and 5 *shaykh*s were serving in these mosques. There were 13 *khatibs* with secondary, and 5 with a primary level religious education. One more ordinary *imom* had completed intermediate level religious education. The level of state secular education among the clergy remained unchanged.[22]

Box: 2 Registered Mosques and Religious Figures in the Tajik SSR

Year	Mosques	Nos. of clergy	Types of registered clergy			Educational Level					
						Religious Education			Secular Education		
			*khatib*s	*imom*s	*shaykh*s	pri [23]	sec	s	pri	sec	h
1954	26	35	12	19	4	7	23	5	3		
1955	29	39	25	9	5	16	16	7	12	1	
1956	30	41	26	10	5	14	14	8	11		
1957	33	43	28	10	5	5	22	8	11		
1960	20	51	20	12	19[24]		30	21	26	11	

According to the statistical report of the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR by 1960 there were 92 registered staff in 20 registered mosques in the republic. 10 prayer houses or

[20] This is another cause of confusion in the terms and position of clergy within the mosques that appear in the statistical report of the CARC representatives.

[21] In that year, 12 of these *khatib*s were estimated to have higher and 6 secondary level religious education. Among the *imam*s or *muazzin*s, 2 had intermediate and 8 primary level religious education. Only one of the *khatib*s, but 9 *imam*s and 3 *shaykh*s had reached the primary level of general state education. See BMDJT, f. 1569, op. 1. ed. khr. 47, d. 1, (26 July 1956), pp. 13-16.

[22] BMDJT, f. 1569, op. 1, ed. khr. 56, d. 1, (28 July 1957), pp.5-6.

[23] (pri) stands for primary level education; (sec) for secondary or intermediate education and (h) for the higher level education

[24] Adapted from statistical reports for the years 1954 to 1960. See the reports by the CARC commissioner in Tajik SSR in the collection of the *Upolnomochennyi soveta po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR po Tadzhikskoi SSR* in BMDJT, f. 1569, op. 1, (1944-1962).

mosques were closed in 1960 and there were a further 230 that were not used in the Tajik SSR. There were 20 *imom khatib*s, 12 serving as ordinary *imom*s, and 19 described as *sufis* in the registered mosques.[25]

As can be seen from the analysis of this statistical report, there were no Sunni Muslim clergy with primary level religious education, and a significant number were categorised with higher and intermediate levels of religious education. In comparison to previous years the numbers of the *imom-khatib*s, the ordinary *imom*s who had attained secondary level of secular education increased by 1961.[26] While these figures indicate the educational levels of the various kinds of religious figures, they do not reveal much about how these levels were defined.[27] Was it the religious figures themselves who defined their level of education or the commissioner who categorised it according to the specially designed forms? Since most of the graduates of the Mir Arab *madrasa* were sent to serve in the registered mosques, it was likely that the educational levels were also defined in the 1960s based on their studies at this *madrasa*.

By the end of the period under study quite a significant number of registered religious figures such as the staff of the *qoziyot*, the *imom-khatib*s and ordinary *imom*s of the seventeen registered mosques in the former Tajik SSR were students and graduates of the Mir Arab *madrasa* and Tashkent Islamic Institute. For instance, the long-serving *qozi* of Tajikistan, Kalonov Abdullojon, from Leninobod province, completed his studies in the Mir Arab *madrasa* six years before being appointed as a *qozi* and representative of SADUM in the Tajik SSR. He replaced the *qozi* Abdulmajid Yusupov.[28] Hoji Akbar

[25] See BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, ed. xr. 41, d. 1, (28 February 1961), p. 64.

[26] It appears that in their reports the *upolnomochennye* did not clarify these titles, as in some statistical reports registered clergy serving in mosques are described as *imom-khatib*s, *mutawalli*s, *ishan*s, and others in some as *khatib*s, *imom*s and *sufis.*

[27] The statistical forms were provided by the council to the *upolnomochennye* in the republics and *oblast*s to provide detailed information about the backgrounds of religious figures. See for instance, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 243-253 and also Eren Tasar, 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', pp. 143-146.

[28] At the meeting of the SADUM presidium in 1961, Yusupov was criticized for not carrying out the instructions of the SADUM. He was blamed for not preaching about SADUM's *fatwa*s in mosques and was occupied with his family due to his old age. He was also criticized for not speaking sufficient Arabic and Russian which were important for establishing links with foreign countries. This *qozi* therefore was considered inappropriate for the contemporary demands of SADUM's work and hence removed. Abdullojon

Turajonzoda, who served as the last *qozi* of the Tajik SSR from 1988 to 1991, also undertook his studies first in Mir Arab *madrasa*, then in the Islamic Institute of Tashkent and finally graduated with a degree from a university in Amman, Jordan.[29] Several other well-known religious figures from the Tajik SSR followed the same educational and career path, by first studying at these two centres, then abroad and returning to serve in the registered mosques in the Tajik SSR.[30]

Students accepted that they should study at these official institutions for the purpose of learning Islam; however they received their first religious training in illegal, private family and separate circles known as *hujra*-based schools. In 1975, the admission commission at Mir Arab *madrasa* found that 88 out of the 98 candidates applying for the academic year 1975-76 showed a good knowledge of Arabic and knew some verses of the Qur'an by heart. To the question posed by the admission commission as to who had taught them Arabic and Qur'an, 88 students replied that they were taught by their grandfathers and parents, neighbours and religious figures. Eight students replied that they had learned it independently. When asked what motivated these candidates to apply to the Mir Arab *madrasa*, 94 of them replied that they had applied because of their 'personal interest and religious belief and the insistence of their parents'. Only 3 of these candidates replied that they were motivated by a) 'a passion and drive to learn the Arabic language, about the people of the Middle East', b) 'a wish to know more about Muslim people', and c) 'a desire to understand the words of Qur'an as the Soviet Muslim must understand the law of the *shari'a* correctly'.[31]

While a limited number of youth from Sunni Muslim families from the Tajik SSR had the opportunity to study at these official centres, a relatively larger number were encompassed by the informal circles of learning. Regarding the Ismaili *khalifa*s in Gorno-Badakhshan, it

---

Kalonov was considered an appropriate person for this position due to his skills, studying at the Mir Arab *madrasa* and working as a SADUM-appointed *muhosib* (accountant) in the Samarqand and Bukhara provinces of the Uzbek SSR and later teaching at the Mir Arab *madrasa*. See BMDJT. f. 1516, op. 1, ed. xr. 95, d. 9, (11 December 1961), p. 1.

[29] See Tim Epkenhans, 'Institutions of Islamic Learning in Tajikistan', in Michael Kemper and Stephan Reichmuth, ed., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London, 2010), p. 318.

[30] See Abdullo Rahnamo, 'Chastnoe religioznoe obrazovanie v Tadzhikistane. Sovremennoe polozhenie problem i vyvody' available at http://islamnews.tj

[31] See GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 736, (25 September 1975), p. 5.

was reported that none of them had a higher level of religious education in the post-Second World War period. This was due to the differences in the teachings of Shi'a Ismaili Muslims from the curriculum prepared by the Sunni SADUM teachers and scholars for the Mir Arab *madrasa* and later at Tashkent Islamic Institute. The registered Ismaili *khalifa*s in Gorno-Badakhshan with secondary level religious education in the 1950s had reportedly attained this level in the traditional *maktab*s prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union.[32] In his presentation to the meetings of the CARC commissioners in Tashkent, Mirzobek Bodurov, pointed out that only 11 out of 174 Ismaili religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan were able to read Arabic and had a good understanding of some of the Ismaili teachings. The rest of the religious figures, according to Bodurov, were illiterate, and had some knowledge of the oral performance of some of the Ismaili rituals as a formality. He concluded in his presentation that:

> Due to the change in the ideology and in the minds of the Soviet people, including the people of Pamir, religion and religious practice will disappear by themselves. Belief in religion will decline. Hence, the demand for religious figures will decrease.[33]

From the bureaucratic position of the CARC commissioner, deliberately portraying the low level of religious knowledge among the religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan was a convenient way of highlighting the weakening role of religion in society as a whole. In this case, the CARC commissioner in Gorno-Badakhshan, like many of his colleagues in other parts of the Soviet Union, downplayed the information on religious figures and the level of religiosity in Gorno-Badakhshan for a specific audience, the council.[34]

Research on Islamic education in the Uzbek SSR, where the two official religious institutions operated in the Soviet period, also highlight the fact that significant numbers of students spent time at these institutions simply in order to obtain official certificates and diplomas. However, these students had received better religious education in the private milieu of the *hujra* type of schools. In addition, the teaching curriculum at these official centres for studying religion was dominated by secular subjects and the modules taught in

[32] See GA GBAO, f.110, op.1, d.6, (10 October 1952) for information on the level of religious education of the unregistered but functioning *khalifa*s in the districts of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Tajik SSR by 1 October 1952.

[33] BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, ed. xr. 44, d. 3, 'Doklad na Tashkentskom soveshanie o rabote upolnomochennogo soveta po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri ispolkoma GBAO, Bodurova M', (2 April 1954), pp. 20-21.

[34] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 15-17.

universities in some Middle Eastern countries.[35] This argument indicates that the quality of teaching in the official religious centres may not have been higher than what was taught in the family and *hujra* type of schools. The dramatic growth of the Muslim population and the need for religious experts in turn rendered these two official centres unable to cope with the demands for religious cadres. It can thus be seen that the private and illegal family-based teaching did not merely provide students with a primary background in religious teaching, but also gave rise to more advanced and different types of clandestine schooling in this period.

5.2. Private and Underground Religious Teaching

> When I spoke at a conference on Islam in 1996, they asked me from which higher Arabic (Islamic institute) I had graduated. I replied: 'az madrasai olii tag-tagi podvalhoyi Dushanbe', (From the higher level *madrasa* in the basement rooms of Dushanbe city).[36]

Private learning survived during the years of persecution in the 1930s and came above ground with the concession to religious activity from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s. The religious teachers adapted their activity very quickly to the new repressive measures against religion authorised by the Soviet leader Khrushchev from 1959 to 1964 by going underground. It was therefore not so much the concession, but also the strict measures against religion from 1959 to 1964, the shortage of official centres for religious learning, as well as the demographic changes in places like the Tajik SSR, that together created favourable conditions for the rise of underground teaching.

It is difficult to establish the dates of origin and the number of private and informal teaching circles in the Tajik SSR as the data on religious teaching is not provided accurately in the archival documents. Instances when registered and unregistered *ishan*s and *domullo*s organised separate teaching circles were considered as violations of the Soviet legislation on religion. In the years of moderate religious policy, three attempts to organise religious schools, apart from the Mir Arab *madrasa*, were rejected in 1947 by the

[35] See Ashirbek Muminov, Uygun Ghafurov and Rinat Shigabdinov, 'Islamic Education in Soviet and Post–Uzbekistan', in Michael Kemper, Raul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth, ed., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London, 2010), pp. 223-279.

[36] Extract from my interview on 12 February 2011 in the Hissor district with the *ishan* Abdulkhalil Abdulmajid (b. 1940). For more on his biography and writing, see Hoji Rustami Ghashioni, *Dostoni Zindaginomai Eshoni Abdulmajid* (Dushanbe, 2011).

officials.[37] In an internal memorandum sent in 1955 by the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR to the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party it was reported that there were 40 registered mosques in the Tajik SSR. It was also mentioned in this memorandum that the influence of religion was high as religious activity had increased among the population. Significant numbers of unregistered religious figures such as *ishan* Bobojon, in the *kolkhoz* named after Lenin around the city of Stalinobod (present-day Dushanbe), had about three thousand *murid*s. Another *ishan*, Hamidjon, in the Hissor district, reportedly had two thousands *murid*s. In 1953 *ishan* Hamidjon organised religious schools teaching the Qur'an and the basics of the *shari'a.*[38] Cases of clandestine religious instruction for small groups of children were also uncovered in 1962 in Hissor and Regar districts and in the cities of Leninobod and Qurghonteppa.[39] These instances are just a few examples of the spread of private religious teaching from the family milieu into independent circles.

These separate circles of teaching drew more students through the ties of relatives, teachers and students. Since Islamic *maktab*s and the *madrasa* ceased to exist by 1950s the generation born at that period received their education in family schools. By the mid-1950s and early 1960s after they had completed secondary state education, they were free to leave home. It was after this that young people aged fifteen or above could join the circles that had emerged. These learning and teaching circles were initially organised by elderly religious figures, some of whom even received their education prior to the establishment of the Soviet regime. Thus, from the mid-1950s, underground religious teaching shifted from a primary level, limited to the basic knowledge of Islamic principles and the Arabic script, to the next or intermediate level of studying specific subjects according to the curriculum set out by the teachers themselves. The intermediate level of study in these circles provided the basis for an advanced or higher level of study of a specific branch of Islamic education, literature, the Qur'an or *fiqh* (jurisprudence) under specialist teachers.

Private religious teaching developed throughout the 1970s, in size, content and form, with the emergence of more advanced, relatively higher level underground circles in the capital city of Dushanbe and in other highly populated towns and districts of the Tajik SSR.

[37] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 355.

[38] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 114, Dokladnye zapiski SRK. Perepiska s Sovetom Ministrov SSR, TsK KPSS i rukovodiashimi organami po voprosu religioznykh kul''tov na 1955 god', (23 June 1955), p. 38.

[39] *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 355.

During the field research for this study thesis I interviewed 10 individuals who joined the informal *hujra* school from the age of 15, and in their youth, had had to travel to other parts of the Tajik SSR and even to the Uzbek SSR to study religious subjects under a known *domullo*. Several informants mentioned that they continued to study for more than ten years, learning different religious subjects under different teachers in the *hujra*s.[40]

The organisers of illegal private schools, if discovered by the officials and especially the staff of the KGB, had to face punishment according to the law. For instance, in 1971 a *mullo* and another individual were put on trial. It was discovered that they had organised a school for 22 children in a private house in one of the villages in Leninobod province in the north of Tajik SSR. They were both sentenced for three years in prison. Another unregistered *mullo* in the Karl Marx *kolkhoz* in the Qurghon-Teppa province organised a school in a private home for 18 students from whom he received tuition fees. These students were from the city of Qurghon-Teppa, and its nearby districts of Wakhsh and Shaartuz. In 1982, 20 such schools, some with as much as about 50 students, were reported as functioning in the Tajik SSR. Their number increased in subsequent years.[41] This evidence again pointed to the flourishing of private and informal religious teaching. From the 1960s to the late 1980s two of these kinds of teaching circles in Dushanbe were attracting students from all over the Tajik SSR for higher-level Islamic education.

One of these religious schools among the Sunni population was organised by Abd al-Rashid Musobekov (Musobekzoda) (1883-1978) who served as the *qozi* of the Tajik SSR

[40] For instance, my informant, Eshoni Abdulkhalil (b. 1940); mentioned he had studied under different teachers from 1957 to 1975. (Interviewed on 12 February 2011 in the Hissor district); Another prominent religious figure among the Sunni Muslims of the Tajik SSR, Dommullo Muhammadii Qumsangiri (1925-2012), mentioned that he had studied from 1960 to the mid-1970s in the learning circles in the Wakhsh Valley and the city of Dushanbe. (Interviewed on 3 September 2011, in Qizilnishon village of the Qumsangir district of the Khatlon region); The former teacher of Islamic Institute of Tajikistan, Makhdumi Imomiddin Kiromiddin (b. 1940) also told that he had studied from 1967 to 1977 in the school organised by Qazi Ab al-Rashid. From 1978 to 1989, he studied in the learning circle of Mawlawi Hindustoni. (Interviewed on 24 August 2011 in the Daryobed village of the Rudaki district nearby Dushanbe). The present librarian of the Islamic Institute of Tajikistan, Salohiddinzoda Ahliddin, studied in the underground religious school for *qori*s in the Farghona Valley in Uzbek SSR. (Interviewed on 20 April 2011).

[41] For this evidence of clandestine teaching reported in the Soviet archives, see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 355-359.

from 1951 to 1958.[42] Another such type of teaching circle was formed by Muhammadjon Rustamov known as Mawlawi Hindustoni (1892-1989). Both of these Sunni religious figures migrated to the Tajik SSR from Uzbek SSR in the years after the Second World War and organised private teaching schools in Dushanbe.[43]

The spread of religious teaching in the capital city, towns, and other urban and modernised areas of the Tajik SSR, contradicted the official Soviet view that Islam had a strong presence only in rural areas.[44] This argument stemmed from the fact that the larger portion of the Muslim population lived in the rural areas of the Tajik SSR. New Soviet-built cities such as Dushanbe were considered places with a modern style of life rather than the traditional one as found in rural areas. In contrast to these interpretations of Islam in Soviet sources, religious views were widely spread among the urban population, especially the intelligentsia, party careerists and bureaucrats. Significant numbers of the urban population were attending mosques; some members of the Communist party were even participated in shrine pilgrimages. Many instances were reported where heads of party units, officials and the intelligentsia made no effort to propagate atheism. Some of the religious scholars were employed in the newly established Oriental research institutes in the capital cities in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Although working in the subordinate positions of language teacher and keeper of the Islamic manuscript collections, these scholars produced a significant amount of unpublished catalogues in these centres. [45] As can be noticed in the case of the Tajik SSR, the department of Oriental studies hosted students and researchers,

[42] For more on the biography of Qozi Abd al-Rashid, see Stephane Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)', *Central Asian Survey*, 30 (1) (2011), pp. 53–80.

[43] In recent years, several academic and journalistic studies have been written on the biography and works of Hindustoni and other leading religious figures in the Tajik SSR. See Abdullo Rahnamo, *Ulamoi islomi dar Tojikiston* (Dushanbe, 2009) and also Dilshodi Abdumajid, 'Ruzgori Mawlawii Hindustoni. Zindagie miyoni otashu ashk wa io khotirae az olimi buzurg, ruhonii shinokhta wa mardi khoksor', *Farazh*, 33 (243), (17 August 2011) and his article on 'Domullo Hikmatullohi tojikobodi-Mawlawii soni?', *Farazh*, 34 (244), (12 August 2011).

[44] For the Soviet scholarly interpretation of Islam being stronger in rural areas see Mark Saroyan, 'Rethinking Islam in the Soviet Union', in Susan Gross Solomon, ed., *Beyond Sovietology: Essays in Politcs and History* (New York, 1993), pp. 23-52.

[45] Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth, ed., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London, 2010), p. 17.

many of whom had received a prior religious education, reading Islamic texts in Arabic and Persian with their families. The known intellectual, Muhammadjon Hindustoni who studied in the *madrasas* of Bukhara and India in the early Soviet period, also worked for some years at the department, which later became the Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Legacy of the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR. He was appointed a teacher of Urdu and expert in classical manuscripts.[46]

In the 1950s, researchers from the Institutes of Oriental Studies in Leningrad, Tashkent and Dushanbe organised an expedition to collect and catalogue the Islamic manuscripts preserved by the families of the *ishan*s, *khalifa*s, *domullo*s, *okhon*s and other individuals. One of the examples of this kind of research into Islamic heritage was the systematic collection of manuscripts among the Ismaili population in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast from 1959 to 1961. Facsimiles of 186 different manuscripts (a total 253 copies including 67 duplicates) were submitted to the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Dushanbe for cataloguing. This kind of research also suggests how religious literature was preserved and transmitted through *kotibi* (copying) to the next generation of students in private religious schools. Soviet Orientalist researchers, non-Muslims and those titled 'co-opted Muslim researcher' produced extensive literary studies based on these manuscripts.[47]

5.3. Migration and the Changing Religious Milieu in the Tajik SSR

In order to understand the development of religious teaching in urban and newly-developed areas, it is important to look at the internal migration process in the Tajik SSR. Internal migration radically altered the ethnic and demographic composition of the republic's population. As a result of forced internal and external migration motivated by the

[46] See BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 2, ed. xr, 25, d. 2, *Materialy predstavlyaemmye v Tsk KP Tadzhikistana, Sovet Ministrov Respubliki yi vyshestoyashie partiino-sovetskie organi, KGB i drugie organizatsii o rabote s religioznymi kul'tami*. The letter by Mirzoev, the head of the Unit of Oriental Studies and Written Legacy, to the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR, D. Ahmedov on 5 of October to request the appointment of Muhammadjon Rustamov as a full-time member of staff and the positive reply of the commissioner to this request on 16 October 1961.

[47] Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth, ed., *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (London, 2010), p. 17.

development of the cotton industry, the less populated broad valleys of the southern Tajik SSR turned into densely populated industrial and agricultural areas.[48]

The forced internal migrations also changed the religious landscape of the country, resulting in an increasing exchange and competition between the officially appointed and the unregistered religious personnel, especially the Sufi leaders. Dudoignon refers to the rivalry between two kinds of religious figures, the Tajik-speaking highlanders who were linked to learning centres in Bukhara and Samarqand, and the Uzbek-speaking lowlanders who originated from the Fergana Valley.[49] These changes in the religious landscape were mainly experienced by the Sunni Muslim majority. However, as a result of mass migration, groups of the Ismaili minority were also moved from their traditional homelands and settled among other ethnic and religious groups in various districts of the Wakhsh Valley in the current Khatlon province of Tajikistan.[50]

Shortly after the creation of the Tajik SSR, the Soviet government planned to develop an irrigation system and cotton industry in plains such as the Wakhsh Valley. Starting in the mid-1920s the population of the mountainous areas of Qarotegin and Darwoz were forcibly resettled in this valley, primarily to develop the cotton industry. This phase of migration was not successful as only 30% of the original 56,000 remained in the new areas, the rest returned home or moved into other places. The forcible resettlement of the populations of the mountain areas of Gharm, Kulob and Gorno-Badakhshan continued from 1925 to 1941 with the transfer of 48,700 families into the Wakhsh Valley. Between 1942 and 1947 some 20,000 more households were transferred to the lowlands of Wakhsh. From 1947 to 1960, the Soviet government forcibly moved the inhabitants of remote villages in the Gorno-Badakhshan and Kulob to this area. On the whole, during the 1950s the Soviet government resettled over 100,000 people in this valley, which radically changed the demography and ethnic composition of the population of the Qurghonteppa region. As mentioned, migrants,

[48] See Olivier Ferrando, 'Soviet population transfers and interethnic relations in Tajikistan: assessing the concept of ethnicity', *Central Asian Survey,* 1 (2011), pp. 39-52; and also Christian Bleuer, 'State-building, Migration and Economic Development on the Frontiers of Northern Afghanistan and Southern Tajikistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 3 (2012), pp. 69-79.

[49] Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-1991)', *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80.

[50] See Aziz Niyazi, 'Islamskaia traditsiia i protsessi modernizatsii v Tadzhikistane', *Islam v SNG* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 123-138.

mainly Tajiks from mountain areas, some Uzbeks from the Fergana Valley, Russians, Germans and other nationalities composed 90% of the population in 1980. The remaining population of the region was composed of the indigenous Laqay, Kungrat and Uzbek inhabitants.[51] Within this context of settlement in the Wakhsh Valley from the 1950s to the end of the Soviet era it is important to examine how the immigrant population practiced and understood their religion while living among various other populations.

The analysis of the kind of religious practice and education that existed among the population of the mountain areas prior to their migration to new settlements reveals important details of the history of religious life at this period. As mentioned above, in the years of repression in the 1930s, significant numbers of religious figures fled to neighbouring countries, especially Afghanistan. Some took refuge in other parts of Tajikistan, and some spent years underground. According to the information provided by the CARC commissioner for the Gharm province, there were about 350 mosques and 25 *madrasa*s, and the same number of *maktab*s until 1930.[52] Hundreds of *mullo*s, *ishan*s and *khalifa*s were training students in these *madrasa*s and *maktab*s. In the absence of other archival sources at the present stage it is impossible to judge the accuracy of these figures about religious schools and clergy. What these numbers figures reveal though is that religious education was well developed among the population of the former Gharm Oblast (Qarotegin Valley) prior to the establishment of the Soviet regime in this region. Of the thirty-seven great and influential *ishan*s living in the region prior to 1930, only two remained in 1950, and had no influence among the population. None of the *maktab*s and *madrasa*s were functioning by the end of 1930s. The various *ishan*s, *mullos* and religious figures had left the territory of Gharm and Qarotegin, and lived with the transferred population in the Wakhsh Valley. As for the mosque buildings, most of them fell into ruin except for six buildings, which were used as storehouses.[53]

---

[51] Christian Bleuer, 'State-building, Migration and Economic Development on the Frontiers of Northern Afghanistan and Southern Tajikistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 3 (2012), pp. 69-79.

[52] Gharm was founded as a province in 1920 and abolished in 1955 due to the migration of its population to Wakhsh Valley. For more on transfer of its population see Abdulhaev, R. *Ta'rikhi muhojirat dar Tojikiston (1924 -2000)* (Dushanbe, 2009).

[53] See BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, ed. xr. 44, d.3, 'Materialy upolnomochennogo Soveta i oblastnykh upolnomochennykh', see the report by Karaev the CARC commissioner under the *oblispolkom* of Gharm province, (5 April 1955), pp. 26-29.

Life in the new densely populated areas seemed to create more favourable conditions for the development of private religious teaching. Migrants from the same districts, villages and neighbourhoods, were often settled together in these new areas. This resettlement of migrants based on regional and ethnic affiliation strengthened the strong sense of belonging to a particular regional group rather than to family or other lineage. For decades migrants such as Gharmis, Kulobis and Badakhshanis living in the Wakhsh Valley remained attached to their regional identities.[54] The migrant groups from these regions attempted to preserve their differences both from each other and from the local inhabitants. While it appeared that regional geography played an important role for the migrants' sense of identity in the new settlements, the boundaries of religious identity were very much shaped by the activity and influence of the individual religious figures among the Sunni Muslims, including the Sufi *ishan*s.[55]

Regarding the Ismaili minority who had migrated from Gorno-Badakhshan, it appears that they maintained their distinct religious identity through the performance of specific religious rituals, led by selected *khalifa*s. Few *khalifa*s functioned among the Pamiri Ismailis in the districts of Qumsangir, Kolkhozobod, Jilikul and the city of Qurghon-Teppa. These *khalifa*s gave religious instruction to their own sons and the children of relatives and friends. The most notable *khalifa*s were Murodbekov Sultonaidar and Jannatov Shermuhammad in the district of Qumsangir. In the Soviet period, the Ismailis together with other migrants from Gorno-Badakhshan formed a special brigade to work in a *kolkhoz* named after Lenin in Qumsangir. This *kolkhoz* provided the Pamiri brigade with their own plot of land and a store-room, which they later turned into a *choi-khona* (tea-house). This was then turned into a *jamo'at-khona* in 1991.[56] In the district of Jilikul, the most notable religious figure among the Ismailis was Shohhusaynov Fakhriddinsho who taught Arabic and Qur'anic recitation to both Ismaili and Sunni children. Fakhriddinsho was the son of an Ismaili *pir,* Shoh Husayn from the Rushan district. In the 1930s together

[54] This strong sense of regional identity among the migrants from mountainous areas of Badakhshan, Kulob and Gharm was vividly expressed with the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in 1992. For more on migration and regional identity in Tajik civil war see Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creations of Nations* (London, 2000) and Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or reconciliation?* (London (2001).

[55] See Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-1991)', *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80.

[56] For more on this, see the article on the opening of this *jamoat-khona* by Habibi Faridun, 'Jamo'at-khonai Ismoiliyon' *Sadoi Mardum* (6 June 1991).

with his brother Sayidzamonidin he fled from Soviet territory to Afghanistan. In 1960 he crossed back to the Soviet Union.[57] After being interrogated by the KGB for some time, Fakhriddinsho was allowed to live in the territory of the Tajik SSR. He first worked as a guard in the Hissor district. Later on, at the request of the Pamiri chairman of a *kolkhoz*, Fakhriddinsho was brought to the Jilikul district to serve as an Ismaili *khalifa*. Fakhriddinsho's knowledge of the Qur'an, Islamic subjects and Persian allowed him to establish himself as a religious teacher among both Sunnis and Ismailis.[58] As mentioned above, it was first in the 1930s and then in the 1950s that some of the population from Gorno-Badahshan were transferred to the Wakhsh Valley. From one document it can be established that by 1931 there was a group of Ismailis living in the city of Qurghonteppa and that they organised a religious community. A person named Mirzo Qoim collected *zakot* of around 500 rubles from them to be delivered to the court of Aga Khan III. By his *farmon* of 20 March-18 April 1931, Aga Khan III appointed Khodja Mumin as the head of the Ismaili community of Qurghonteppa.[59]

The social setting in Wakhsh Valley seemed to offer more opportunities and space for religious activity than the isolated, narrow and less populated mountain villages. The new settlements in the Wakhsh Valley, especially the *kolkhoz*es and their sub-divisions, the brigade, were formed based on traditional solidarity groupings, the clans and fellow villagers. For instance, migrants from Gorno-Badakhshan had their own separate brigade within a *kolkhoz* dominated by people from Qarotegin in the Qumsangir district. *Kolkhoze*s were also composed on the basis of a particular ethnic group such as Germans, Koreans, and Russians living in neighbouring *posiolkas* (villages). It was this creation of new solidarity groups with their own particular territories, administrative buildings, offices, teahouses and factories that provided spaces for religious activity. It has been noted that this kind of settlement, with its regional and ethnic composition, resulted in various groups preserving their separate identity and cultural practices. Religious activity was not

[57] Sayyidzamoniddin Shohhusayn (1905-1996), better known by his pen name, Adimi Shughnoni, wrote poetry, including the poetical interpretation of Ismaili views. For more on his poetry in Shughni and Persian, see his collection of songs in Shughni language, *Adimi du sohil* (Khorog, 1992) and his *diwan* (collection of poems) entitled *Ashki Asrat* (Rawalpindi, 1380).

[58] Information from my interview with his son Shohhusaynov Sayyidmunir (b.1960), currently serving as the *khalifa* of the Ismaili community in the Jilikul district of the Khatlon region. (Interviewed on 19 May 2011)

[59] See the Russian translation of the *farman* of the Aga Khan, Document, No. 65, in A. B. Stanishevskii, ed., *Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov po istorii Pamira i Ismailizmu* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), p. 347.

restricted to the territories of these *kolkhoze*s and *posyolka*s; a Tajik *mullo* from one *kolkhoz* attracted an audience even among the Laqay (Uzbek), Turkmen, Arab tribes living in other districts. This kind of development was a peculiar characteristic of Sufi brotherhoods in Central Asia designed to attract followers, and to create networks of *pir*s and *murid*s, despite differences in their nationality and locations.[60]

The new administrative and territorial centres in the Wakhsh Valley placed various groups and nationalities in one settlement, and provided space for work on a common piece of land or in cotton-cleaning plants, *avtobaza* (haulage companies), as well as in schools, libraries, kindergartens, or places of rest like *choi-khona*s. These entities, especially *choi-khona*, offered a comfortable milieu for religious activity, debates, and even for teaching. It was in some of the buildings in these *avtobaza*s, cotton plants and other work places, that underground religious teaching evolved. In 1957 the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR reported that some *kolkhoz*es had their own reasons for creating conditions for religious activity within their territories:

> In many districts of the republic, (Tajikistan) there were small village mosques, which had been used as the storage buildings of the *kolkhoze*s up to three years ago. In recent years, the administration of the *kolkhoze*s decided to not use these buildings as storage and gave them to the group that gathers for prayer (*namoz*). The administrations of the *kolkhoze*s are concerned that the believers should not waste their time travelling to pray in mosques located some distance away.[61]

In the same report it was mentioned that by December 1957 there were 33 registered mosques and five *mazor*s in the republic. The CARC commissioner in the republic acknowledged that he could not provide an appropriate estimate of the hundreds of unregistered religious figures. The reason for the activity of the unregistered figures and illegal gatherings for prayer was that the majority of the population had no opportunity to attend registered mosques. In the absence of registered mosques people prayed in small groups during the celebrations of *Id-i Qurbon* and *Id-i Ramazon*, in unregistered mosques in their villages and in open fields. In many cases daily or weekend prayer and the celebration of large festivals, were observed during busy seasonal work. Winter was mentioned as a favourable time of the year for believers to come together for prayer, discussion of religious themes and teaching religion to children. The other places used as

[60] See Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (London, 2000), pp. 143-160.

[61] BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, ed. khr. 59, d. 2, 'Dokladnaia zapiska o sostoianie religioznosti sredi naseleniia Tadzhikskoi SSR po sostoianiiu s janvaria po dekabr 1957', by K. Hamidov', (1 December, 1957), pp. 1-11.

prayer-houses were the *mehmon-khona*s in the evenings, especially during *ruza*, believers invited guests for discussion, listened to the radio and read newspapers. According to this report, the majority of the unregistered religious figures, the *ishan*s and *mullo*s, were in Stalinabad (Dushanbe) and its surrounding areas, such as in the former Kuktosh district. They had followers, especially among the local *Laqay*s living in the valleys, hills and *aul*s (villages). Religion had a strong presence among the *laqay*s as some of them were teaching Arabic and the basics of Islam to their children. There were 20 unregistered religious groups in the Regar district, some of which had special prayer rooms, and *mehmon-khona*s. More of these groups were to be found in the Hissor district, eight in Kolkhozobod and in Panj, and 13 in the Shaartuz district, all located in the Wakhsh Valley. Nine of these unregistered religious figures operated in Orjonikidzeobod district.[62]

Unregistered figures, groups and prayer houses, also existed in other districts of the republic, especially in the places where registered mosques did not exist. The *imom*s leading prayer and other rituals in unofficial mosques were selected by believers, rather than appointed by the office of the *qoziyot* of the Tajik SSR. The existence of most the non-registered religious figures in the capital city, their gathering in the *mehmon-khona*s itself suggest that favourable conditions also existed for religious activity in the industrialised cities. An analysis of the religious situation in different settlements suggests that it was difficult for the Soviet government to regulate religious activities in the cities and towns with larger populations. In contrast it was perhaps more easier for local bureaucrats and party members to keep an eye on or prevent illegal religious activity in the less populated rural villages in the regions of Gharm, Kulob and Gorno-Badakhshan.

One of the main changes in the religious landscape caused by migration and socio-economic development in the Tajik SSR was the expansion of the religious networks, such as the link between the religious figures and their followers. Another change in the religious landscape was the spread of religious teaching through the networks of teachers and students. In the mid-1950s, dozens of family-based and *hujra* circles appeared in the Wakhsh Valley and other highly populated areas of Tajikistan. Religious schools were organised in the Wakhsh Valley by Mullo Jurai Zargari and Dommullo Safarali in the city of Qurghonteppa, and by Eshoni Abdulhayi Chughdabiyoni, Eshoni Mahmadsayid, Eshoni

[62] BMDJT, f. 1516, op. 1, ed. khr. 59, d. 2, (2 August 1955), pp. 10 -14.

Nosihiddin, Akhmadkhoja and Azizkhoja in other places.[63] Sufi *tariqa*-based teachings were organised in the area of Khoja Obi Gharm by Eshoni Abdurahmonjon.[64] Another famous place where underground religious teaching flourished at this period was the *posiolka* of Yuzhniy in the suburbs of Dushanbe. [65] Private lessons were also taught by Makhdumi Tojiddin in Orjonikidzeobod (present Wahdat) district; by Domullo Muhammadsharif in Hisor, and Domullo Muhammadyusuf in the Yowon district. Several other religious figures, such as Makhdumi Sangi Kulula, Mullo Khujam, Mullo Loyiq and Makhdumi Abdulqodir, taught students in the Sunni-populated Kulob region. Another known religious teacher Eshoni Shaykh taught in the Elok village in the Faizobod district.[66] There were also dozens of private religious schools in the northern region of Leninobod. Listing the names of teachers teaching in certain parts of Dushanbe and its surroundings, however, does not mean that teachers, students and circles always operated in the same area. As the former students and teachers of these underground circles revealed, they often had to change rooms or stop lessons to keep one step ahead of the authorities and especially the KGB. The changes in the location of the schools were also related to the migration of a *domullo* from one area to another. In this case students from other places needed to stay illegally in the place where the teachers were organising

[63] The names of these individuals who had promoted Islamic education among the Sunni population were confirmed by my informants, as for instance, *eshon* Abdulkhalil Abdulmajid (b. 1940) whom I interviewed 12 February 2011 in the Hissor district. In his short poems he describes his experience of learning and honouring his great teacher in the informal religious schools in Qurghonteppa and Dushanbe in the 1970s and 1980s. See for more on him, Hoji Rustami Ghashioni, *Dostoni Zindaginomai Eshoni Abdulmajid* (Dushanbe, 2011).

[64] For more on the biography and activities of Abdurahmonjon see Stephane. A. Dudoignon, 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)', and a recent book in Tajik by Khokiroh Muhammad, *Hazrati pir wa sukhane chand peromuni 'Dil ba yoru dast ba kor'* (Dushanbe, 2010).

[65] According to Sayidahmad Qalandar, a scholar on the life history of Islamic figures in the Tajik SSR, the *posyolka* (village) of Yuzhnii near Dushanbe was referred to as *Bukhoroi kuchak* (Little Bukhara) by the students and teachers of underground school. (Interview with Saidahmad Qalandar, an independent researcher, 20 April 2011). For more for more on religious teaching in post-Soviet period in the city of Dushanbe, see See Manja Stephan, 'Education Youth and Islam: The Growing Popularity of Private Religious Lessons in Dushanbe', *Central Asian Survey*, 4 (2010), pp. 469 -483.

[66] See Rahnamo Abdullo, *Chastnoe religioznoe obrazovanie v Tadzhikistane: Sovremennoe polozhenie problem yi vyvody* available at http://islamnews.tj

informal schools. This was a form of illegal migration in the context of the Tajik SSR, where internal migration for the purpose of education and jobs was allocated and controlled by the state.

5.4. Teaching Curriculum

As shown above, unofficial religious teaching became a widespread phenomenon among the Muslim population of the Tajik SSR living in both rural and urban areas. It attracted students from the various strata of the population including the *intelligentsia*, members of the *kolkhoze*s, the children of Soviet officials and Communist party members. Apart from tracing the development of religious teaching, there is a need to understand the means and tools through which knowledge of Islam was passed from the older to the younger generation. What were the main sources and resources which enabled private family and separate *hujra*-based schools to function? To answer this fundamental question it is important to examine the content of teaching or kind of curriculum used in private and secret schools.

Within a family, the first stage of teaching involved the Arabic alphabet, a basic understanding of religion from introductory textbooks, and learning *duo*s (prayers) by heart. An understanding of *adab* (manner) was also a requirement for teaching and bringing up a person according to the Muslim way of life. Learning Islam in this way was not an innovation of the Muslim clergy in this period, but a continuation of what had been taught in *maktab*s prior to their abolition in the 1920s. Learning in *maktab*s across Central Asia started with the repetition and memorisation of letters, basic arithmetic and an acquisition of *adab.* It was then followed by the memorisation of books called *Haftyak*, *Chahor Kitob* (introductory books of Arabic grammar), and examples of classical Persian literature. This was the main kind of curriculum through which *'ilm* (knowledge) turned into *ta'lim* (teaching) in the *maktab*.

Religious knowledge was also transmitted through various forms of oral recitation often accompanied by musical performances of devotional poetry, *qasida*s and *maddoh*s.[67] The books, which dominated the *maktab* curriculum in Central Asia for centuries, were

[67] For a summary of the various accounts of teaching and learning in a *maktab* prior to the establishment of Soviet rule in Central Asia see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (London, 1998), pp. 20-28; and Mobin Shorish, 'Traditional Islamic Education in Central Asia prior to 1917' in Chantal Lemercier, Gills Veinstien Quelquejay, and S. Enders Wimbush, ed., *Passe Turko-Tatar, Present Soviétique* (Paris, 1986), p. 317-43.

certainly not included in any subjects taught at Soviet-established secular primary schools. Nevertheless, examples of classical Persian literature featured in the new textbooks, especially those sections that emphasised *adab*. When analysing the context of education in the Soviet period, it would therefore be appropriate not only to compare the changes or differences, but also the similarities in the methods and content of learning and teaching in the Soviet secular schools with that of Islamic *maktab*s and *madrasa*s.

Changes in the traditional ways of learning and teaching knowledge for the Muslim population in the Soviet period can therefore be explained by a) the disappearance of the Islamic *maktab*s and *madrasa*s as institutions of learning; and b) the appearance of new secular schools. It can also be explained by the replacement of the old curriculum with the new subjects of history, literature and science that propagated the scientific and atheist worldview in an attempt to remove religious views and ways of upbringing from a student's mind. Nevertheless, in many cases, teachers working at Soviet elementary schools secretly taught the Arabic alphabet and religious books to their children daughters and sons and other close relatives at home.[68] In this way the teachers played the double role of teaching both the secular curriculum and transmitting religious knowledge in private. Examples of elementary books explaining parts of the Qur'an, and Islamic prayers and rituals, were preserved by the families of religious figures and other learned individuals. The *domullo*s and *okhon*s, and the *kotib*s-masters of calligraphy mainly reproduced copies of these books. Printed religious literature emerged later with copies sold secretly and smuggled by those who travelled abroad. Learning from the aforementioned religious books, lasted in a family milieu approximately from the ages of seven to fourteen, parallel to the time when students completed their study at state schools at grade seven or eight.

The next stage of religious teaching in a separate *hujra* included the continuation of the initial knowledge received in the family milieu. Studying in circles or *hujra*s started with learning basic Arabic grammar, and an explanation of the meaning of prayers and other simple texts. It further proceeded by teaching advanced Arabic grammar like *Qofiya* (upper-intermediate or higher level of Arabic grammar) and *Sharhi Mullo* (a commentary

[68] Most of the female students received their first lessons in religion, basic prayer and *adab* from their mothers and grandmothers and from *bibiotyn* (female religious teacher) in informal circles in *mahalla*s. See Manja Stephan, 'Education Youth and Islam: The Growing Popularity of Private Religious Lessons in Dushanbe', *Central Asian Survey,* 4 (2010), pp. 469 -483.

on Arabic grammar). It was also at this level that students started to study the interpretation and commentaries of *hadith* and certain Qur'anic verses. Learning at this stage lasted usually one to five or more years under an independent teacher. The most advanced stage of religious schools in that period appeared in the mid-1960s in the form of teaching circles organised by two leading religious figures: Qozi Abd al-Rashid Musabikzoda (Musobekzoda, Musobekov) and Muhammadjon Rustamov known as Mawlawi Hindustoni.

Studies in the circle or assembly of these two well-known teachers lasted for more than ten years for some students. Qozi Abd al-Rashid, as most of his students recall, mainly taught the *mas'alahoi fiqh* (issues of jurisprudence). This however does not mean that students were not also studying these subjects in the *hujra* schools of Mawlawi Hindustoni. His teaching curriculum was a combination of various theological and scholarly textbooks including *hadith*, lectures on the Qur'an, and textbooks such as *Fiqh al-akhbar, Aqidat al-nasafi*, *Mantiq* (logic), *adab*, ethics expressed in classical Persian literature, Islamic cosmology, narrative history and medicine. [69] According to his former students, Hindustoni's teaching curriculum was distinguished by a focus on *mas'alahoi adabiyot wa zabon* (issues of language and literature) and *mantiq* (logic); his expertise lay in Qur'anic commentary, interpretation of Persian poetry, and particularly the sophisticated poems of Mirzo Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644-1721). Qozi Abd al-Rashid came with an educational background from *madrasa*s of Central Asia (Qoqand and Bukhara). Hindustoni received his initial religious education in Qoqand and Bukhara and then studied in *madrasa*s in Afghanistan and India. The differences in the educational backgrounds of these two figures were obviously later reflected in the way they developed curricula for their students. As has been pointed out, Qozi Abd al-Rashid criticized and opposed the teaching curriculum of Hindustoni, especially the teaching of didactic and gnostic literature and secular (*dunyawi*) issues.[70]

[69] Bakhtiiar Babadjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, 'Muhammadjan Hindustoni (1892-1989) and the beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan', in Stephane Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao, ed., *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to the Late Twentieth Centuries)* (London, 2001), pp. 195-218.

[70] Stephane A. Dudoignon. 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955-1991), *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), p. 11.

5.5. Religious Teaching among the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan

The reports by the CARC later CRA commissioners in Gorno-Badakhshan do not indicate that there were any legal proceedings against clerics and believers involved in religious teaching. Apart from referring to some religious literature possessed by the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s, there is no information on religious teaching in the archival reports from 1950 to 1991. This absence of records on religious education in the archival sources does not mean, however, that this phenomenon had ceased among the population of the *oblast* in the period under study. As my interviews revealed there were dozens of individuals, including those defined in these archival documents as unregistered *okhon*s and a few *bibiotun*s, who were teaching religion to their own and to their relatives' children at this time.

The tradition of transmitting religious knowledge thus continued in individual families who claimed to be from the *awlod* (clan) of *sayyid*s, *pir*s, and other groups of clergy. Religious teaching in Gorno-Badakshhan, however, did not spread beyond the domestic space, as happened in other provinces of the Tajik SSR. The teaching activities, methods and literature within the family schools in the Ismaili-populated areas of Gorno-Badakhshan were quite similar to each other. Significant changes were not introduced in the subjects or books studied. What made religious learning in this period different from the traditional ways of learning in the *maktab* was its clandestine nature, with lessons mainly conducted during the evening hours. One informant, who completed all the stages of Islamic learning within the family environment, described his experience as follows:

> These *maktab*s existed mainly among the families of *sayyid*s and other groups of clergy. They continued to function from 1950 to the 1970s and even until now. Anyone who wanted his children to learn in this type of school would take them to the *okhon*, then he received a *fotiha*[71] according to the *sunnat* (tradition) to enter into the religious school. This ceremony was called 'fotihayi ba maktab dokhil shudan' (prayer to enter the school). For instance, if a man had five children and he wanted one to study religion, he had to take him to the *okhon* for a *fotiha*. After this the child stayed with the teacher and they secretly started learning. Teaching was mainly conducted in a family school after the harvest and during the winter time. The teaching would continue as long as it took the student to complete the study programme. Some students completed the subjects in one winter, some studied for three winters, depending on the aptitude of the *shogird* (student). The usual age to

[71] The Qur'anic verse of *fotiha* is used as a name for prayer that was offered for a person embarking on study, work or a journey.

start studying in a family school was seven years old and above. Usually there were 2-3 children at a time receiving *sabaq* (lesson) in a family school.[72]

This description of how learning started and lasted in a family milieu by an informant who seems to have completed all stages of learning reveals the typical process of learning in a traditional Islamic milieu. Although confined to the family context, the study of Islam was encouraged by the generation of clerics who had themselves received this education prior to the Soviet period. Some of the clerics who were classified as *khalifa*s and itinerant clergy in the list of the commissioner were also known among the people as *okhon*s, although it should be noted that the term *okhon* was used rarely in the reports as a religious-clerical definition. [73] One of the reasons for the absence of this term in the reports was the fact that religious teaching itself was not documented in these reports. The word *okhon* was also applied to teachers in Soviet schools.

Thus dozens of individuals known widely to the people as *okhon*s were categorised in the reports as *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and *tabib*s (healers) of the class of unregistered *brodyachii dukhovenstva* (itinerant clergy). For instance, the name of a known local scholar and poet, Shohfitur Muhabatshozoda is given in the list of unregistered religious personnel living in the Roshtqal'a district of the Gorno-Badakhshan but the archive does not mention that Shohfitur was widely known as an author and *okhon*.[74] Shohfitur wrote poetry on both religious and secular themes and his name constantly featured in *maddohkhoni*.[75] It should also be noted that there were many learned persons, including Shohfutur Muhabatshozoda, who were also classified as clergy in these documents, but not as *olimi namoyoni din.* There were also many other *mullo*s and *khalifa*s who were known also as poets and

[72] Interview with former chairman of the Committee of Religious Affairs in Gorno-Badakhshan in the post-Soviet period. This committee replaced the former office of the *upolnomochennyi* which functioned from 1950 to 1991 under the *oblispolkom* of the province. (Khorog, 9 May 2012).

[73] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 6, 'Svedeniia o nezaregistrirovannykh no deistvuiushikh sluzhiteliakh religioznogo kul'ta /khalify/ po raionam Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti Tadzhikskoi SSR', (1 October 1952), pp. 30-43.

[74] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 1, d. 3, 'Registratsiia pismennykh signalov i induvidual'nykh besed veruiushikh kishlakov', (14 January 1952), pp. 25-26.

[75] For more on Shohfitur's life and work, see a study by Lolo Dawlatbekov, *Shohfutur-adibi donishmand* (Dushanbe, 2012); and for his work on the history of Badakhshan, see Kurbon Muhammad-zoda (Okhun-Sulaimon and Muhabbat Shoh-zoda (Seyiid Futur-Sho), *Tar'rikhi Badakhshon,* ed. B. I. Iskandarov, (Moscow, 1973).

teachers in their areas. Born and educated in the pre-Soviet period, some of these individuals were still alive in the 1950s. One poet, Shamsher, for instance, was known as a *mullo* in his locality due to his knowledge of religious subjects. Sobiri Andarobi was another cleric who had been educated in the *maktabi kuhna* (old school), learning *Haftyak*, the Qur'an, the works of Nasir-i Khusraw and other classical Persian authors.[76] There were many other individuals in the Ishkashim district, like Dawlatbekov Alidod from the village of Darshai, and Shohkhudododov Khodja Orif from Baghush village[77] teaching in a family circle. The tradition of teaching and learning within the family of the Ismaili *pir*s of Shugnan was continued by their sons and grandsons, especially by Shohikalon Shohzodammuhamadov.[78] Other named teachers were Khodji Sayidahmad and Mullo Kalandarsho from the Ghund Valley of the Shugnan district.[79] In the Rushan district, individuals known as *okhon*s, such as Hoji Zuurbekov, Janob Sanglijov, Ruzadorov Shikori, Bandisho Sumonzoda, Amodinov Alishoh, Shojonov Sayidkhusraw, and Sayidmehtar iner alia were reportedly involved in teaching religion in the family milieu.[80] Some of these religious figures in various parts of Gorno-Badakhshan had also practiced *kotibi* i.e., copying by hand classical and medieval Islamic manuscripts.[81] Similarly dozens

---

[76] See La'ljubai Mirzohasan and Alidodi Charoghabdol, *Tazkirayi adiboni Badakhshon* (Khorugh, 2007) p.69.

[77] See the list *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and *okhon*s who had influence among the people and were engaged in the illegal performance of religious rituals among the population of the GBAO by 1 October 1952 see GA GBAO, f.110, d.6, (10 October 1952), p.30.

[78] Shohikalon Shohzodamuhammadov (b 1921) from a family of Ismaili *pir*s of Shugnan persecuted in 1930s. According to my interview with him he served as official *khalifa* for 24 years, including the post-Soviet period. Although in the Soviet period served for a long time as *imongui*, assistant to the *khalifa*, in the post-Soviet period he emerged as one of the leading *khalifa*s. (2 November 2010).

[79] See article by S. Olimova and M. Olimov, 'Musul'manskoe dukhovenstvo v sredneaziatskikh obshestvakh' in their *Musul'manskie lideri: sotsial'naia rol' i avtoritet* (Dushanbe, 2003), p. 42.

[80] For the biography of some of these *okhon*s and *khalifa*s see, Mamadali Bakhtiyorov, *Ta'rikhi Rushan* (Dushanbe, 2013).

[81] For more on the names of some these clergy known as *kotib*s, see the list of the manuscripts discovered among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan, see A. E Bertel's and M. Baqoev, *Alfavitnii catalog rukopisei obnaruzhennikh v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Autonomnoi Oblasti ekspeditsie/ 1959-1963 gg/ Alphabetic Catalogue of Manuscripts Found by 1959-1963 Expedition in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region,* ed. B. G. Ghafurov and A. M. Mirzoev, (Moscow, 1967).

of Sunni clerics in the districts of Wanj, Murgab and Qal'a-i Khumb clandestinely taught Islam to children.

Similarly, many other individuals known among the people as *okhon*s are classified simply as *mullo* or *mulloyi namoyon* (distinguished clergy) in the archival documents. The informant quoted above indicated that it was his grandmother who had taught him religion at an early age in the 1940s. The names of a few women, such as Yusupova Zaydabegim (Khorog), Sayyidfarukhshoeva Bibi (Porshnev village of the Shugnan district) and Sayidkumronova Sayyidkhonim from the Wer village (of the Shugnan district), are mentioned as *bibiotuns* among the unregistered clergy in the archive. These various kinds of clergy, according to the commissioner Bodurov, still enjoyed authority and influence over the Ismaili and Sunni believers in the Gorno-Badakhshan.[82]

What is interesting to note about the activity of the clerics, their role regarding religious teaching and the performance of rituals, is that a *mullo* who carried out these duties was also known as an *okhon* and would teach religion in the family milieu. The boundaries of these activities were somewhat blurred as many formal *khalifa*s and *mullo*s from the 1960s up to the 1980s were only required to lead basic rituals. In theory, from this year onward an informal *mullo* would have rarely been involved in leading rituals, a state of affairs formally agreed to by the officially appointed *khalifa* or *mullo.* In practice, however, this was not observed as there were cases recorded by the CARC commissioner where the unofficial clerics carried out ritual activities which should have been the preserve of the registered *khalifa* or *mullo.*

The oral sources for this thesis revealed that in this period there were significant numbers of clergy, termed as itinerant *mullo*s in these documents, who continued religious teaching and learning in a family circle. These clergy were known as *okhon*s like those teaching in Soviet schools. The local researchers, who had received their religious education in the family milieu, stressed the way that religious teaching passed from one *okhon* to another in a family circle. As the academic secretary at the centre of Islamic Studies, describes:

> In the past if there was someone from an *awlod* (clan) who learned religious knowledge, he would then continue teaching others through a *silsila* (chain) in a family. For instance, my grandfather, Mahrambek, set up his own school. My great-grandfather, Hoji Mirzo, was rich enough to hire a teacher named Shohrustam from Afghanistan who taught my grandfather, Mahrambek, until 1917.

[82] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d.5, see for the information about functioning but unregistered religious figures in the territory of Gorno- Badakhshan by 1956 (26 January 1956), p.12.

> Religious education was free until the 1930s. Apart from this school in Roshtqal'a district there was the family school of *khalifa* Tayib whose father had studied in a *madrasa* in Bukhara. In the 1930s, religious education was suppressed and many of the clerics were exiled. Until the 1960s religious teaching almost came to a total stop. Since the geographical position of Badakhshan was remote and isolated, whatever happened there was known by almost everyone in the area and neighbours would report unauthorised activities. After the 1960s religious teaching revived in Badakhshan. In this period religious teaching in this district was revived by individuals such as Jamshed son of Tayib, Okhon Niyoz, Gulbek Ahmadbekov and a few others. In such a way it passed from father to son and to the next generation.[83]

A number of clergy with a secondary or higher level of education were mentioned in these reports, as well as in oral interviews, as *olimi namoyoni din* (outstanding religious scholars). It was an exaggeration though to regard the ordinary clerics as religious scholars as none of them appear to have written any works on religious topics. Nevertheless this reference should be understood within a context when religious teaching was a rare and underground activity in comparison to widespread Soviet education and continuous atheist propaganda. Interviews and discussions with the former students of the family school, the sons and relatives of the *okhon*s, *khalifa*s and *mullo*s, revealed that the initial pedagogical techniques and the subjects learnt did not differ from those in traditional mainstream Muslim *maktab*s in Central Asia. Ideally, students joining a *maktab* were first taught the *alifbe* (alphabet) and *abjad* (counting). This was followed by reading *Qoidai Baghdodi* (a book on the correct pronunciation of Qur'anic words), reading and reciting *Si-pora Panj-sura* (thirty pieces from five Qur'anic *suras*). These were the subjects taught at the elementary level. In the next level students studied the grammar books of *Haftyak* and *Chahor Kitob.* When the *shogird*s (students) completed these books, they would then read the poetical works of classical authors.

In the Ismaili family school they learned samples of poetry which were mainly taken from the poems in the *Rawshanoi-noma* (The Book of Light) and *Saodat-noma* (The Book of Happiness) attributed to the medieval Ismaili author Nasir-i Khusraw. These short books were purposely selected by the teachers to introduce Ismaili students to the specificities of the Ismaili teachings of Islam. After reading these accessible poetical works the students would embark on studying other works by Nasir-i Khusraw, particularly the treatise of *Wajh-i din* which offers a comprehensive explanation and analysis of religious issues, duties and norms according to Ismaili doctrine.

[83] Interview with Mahrambekov Mahrambek, Academic secretary at the Centre for the Study of Islam under the Office of the President of Tajikistan, (Dushanbe, 11 April 2011).

This clandestine style of teaching in a family circle continued with the existing *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and *okhon*s in the *oblast* until the final years of Soviet rule. However, unlike other parts of the Tajik SSR, religious teaching in Gorno-Badakhshan did not flourish outside the family circle. Neither was there any innovation in the curriculum or teaching style in the isolated and remote villages. It was only from the 1980s onwards that new religious literature seems to have been introduced by those students of the Oriental department studying abroad, as well as those serving as interpreters for the Soviet Army in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the evolution of religious education in its various forms in the Tajik SSR in the period between 1950 and 1985. The rise of religious education during this period was generally conditioned by the concessions that the Soviet state had made to religious societies and believers during the Second World War. At the official level, the Soviet state allowed the establishment of a *madrasa* and an Islamic institute, which were unable to respond to the growing needs of a Muslim generation. While limited numbers of students from the Tajik SSR studied in these official centres for Islamic education, the majority of Muslims had to rely on the family religious schools. With the population growth and mass migration from rural to urban areas informal religious teaching transferred from family schools to separate circles through a network of students and teachers. This network of *hujra* schools was widespread by the end of the 1970s. Beyond the impact of these general socio-economic and policy changes on Islamic education, the chapter revealed strategies that are more complex and the distinct worldview that drove this practice.

The strategies of clandestine learning, textbooks, and production the promotion of a specific worldview emerged not simply due to the lack of space for learning and literature but more as a protective response to the intrusion of atheist propaganda. The point of teaching religion for most of its proponents, students and teachers, was to maintain a distinct identity and morality, as well as the ethic of respect for tradition and authority that is provided in Islamic tradition. Like most of the Muslim clergy, the religious teachers whether Sunni *domullo*s or Ismaili *khalifa*s did not attempt to turn their students against Soviet ideology or the state. Evidence from my interviews and from the archives turned up no evidence of anti-Soviet teachings.

The discourse of the Muslim clergy highlighted the differences and similarities between Islamic doctrine and the ideology of Communism. However, in the views of teachers and students there seems to have been less commonality between Islamic education and atheist teaching. The very title of ilmi *din* (religious knowledge or science) *or olimi ilmi din* (religious scholar) suggested a different worldview to that of knowledge taught at Soviet schools.

What therefore made religious teaching a distinct phenomenon was that it became an enterprise, and a source of social capital for the networks of students and teachers. Studying in a clandestine family *maktab* or in separate *hujra* school created an informal market in which teachers gained authority and presumably material reward. Families in the neighbourhoods where the *hujra* was located offered food and rooms for students who travelled from distant places. Support also came in the form patronage and protection, if there were pressures from security service and local administration. Clandestine Islamic teaching evolved among both Ismailis and Sunnis albeit in different ways and settings, in the family *maktab* and larger circle or *hujra* style and in official institutions. Geographic and demographic changes from the 1950s to 1980s, in the Wakhsh Valley and other parts of the Tajik SSR, created more favourable conditions for the network of informal schooling among Sunni Muslims. As for the Ismaili population in Gorno-Badakhshan, Islamic schools were family based, but knowledge was also spread through preaching and the tradition of *maddohkhoni* during funerals.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined religious life from two perspectives: the changes in the policy, rules and decrees towards religious institutions and the ways in which Muslims practiced their religion milieu. From 1950 to 1985, religious life among Muslim communities and institutions in the Tajik SSR, like everywhere else in the Soviet state, evolved in the context of state policies that were at times relatively moderate and other times far stricter towards believers. The contours of these policies were defined by the central Communist Party leadership, by the Soviet state legislation at the top and the administrative and bureaucratic party state system of monitoring and interference on the ground.

The Soviet policy of the institutionalisation of religious activity might have produced different result in Gorno-Badakhshan had the number of the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s not been reduced in this province. With the renewed anti-religious campaign from 1959 to 1964, the bureaucratic foundation for monitoring religious activity and spreading atheist propaganda was laid among the population of Gorno-Badakhshan. On the one hand, the CARC commissioners tasked with the surveillance of and reporting on the religious situation in their own community embarked on the dichotomous role of inspecting the activity of religious figures with whom they had social and kinship ties.[1] On the other hand, they had to prove their loyalty to the Soviet bureaucratic and ideological system whose aim was the eradication of religious views and practices, in a context of limited legalisation, by means of atheist propaganda and education. Studies on Soviet religious policy points to the way in which legislation applied to the whole Soviet Union, differed in terms of its implementation in the various republics with their respective varieties of religious structures. Tracing the history of religious life in the context of changing state decisions and decrees over span of almost five decades from 1950 to 1985 in Gorno-Badakhshan, therefore, reveals the varied experience of Muslims under Soviet rule.

The documents from the offices of the CARC and later the CRA at first glance reveal the degree of regulation and control of religious activity, the compliance of the believers with legislation and the decrees and decisions of the Communist Party and Soviet government in the field of religious policy. A critical reading of the archival documents against the

[1] Of the six CARC/CRA *upolnomochennye* appointed by the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan only one came from outside the province.

information from oral interviews, however, reveals a different trajectory of adaptation, adjustment, and appropriation of the central state religious policy by local officials. In this process of the institutionalisation of religious activity, religious figures actively involved themselves with the central state policy. At times some of the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s even attempted to dovetail their religious views to match with Soviet state ideology, which stressed on the issues of friendship and peace, justice equality and stability.

One of the daunting tasks of the institutionalisation of religious activity in the Tajik SSR was that of registering of religious figures and mosques, a process marred by a number of problems created by local government. The registration process ended with the dramatic decline of requests from religious societies, i.e., group of believers to the local government to allow opening prayer rooms, mosques or registering official *imom-khatib*s and *khalifa*s. Their number decreased as the state aimed to create sharp divisions between the registered clergy and unregistered itinerant religious figures. The registered clergy, whose activity was institutionalised then became subject to routine monitoring by local officials, and were liable to taxation on the income they accrued from conducting rituals. As for the itinerant clergy, their religious activity was de facto illegal, but they were arguably far freer ideologically, economically and administratively in moving from one territory to another and performing rituals among community. The division of the clergy into the categories of registered and unregistered did not mean that all control over the issue was ceded to the authorities. Cases involving registered *khalifa*s selecting and training their own deputies and assistants, often their own sons, without informing the authorities, were common. Another of the unintended consequences of the dysfunctional process of registration was the burgeoning market in religious practice. Instances of the official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s accusing their fellow clergy of conducting decadent rituals and faith-healing called for interference by the CARC commissioners and local officials in religious affairs.

The integration or accommodation of the official clergy into a Soviet society whose ideology was characterised by widespread atheist policy and emphasis on scientific achievement was not a smooth process. As the commissioners continuously stressed in their report, the influence of religion primarily prevailed among the stratum of population that remained under pressure from their families and neighbours. This suggests that family, in Gorno-Badakhshan like the mosques and shrines in other Muslim-populated areas of Central Asia, remained the main source of preaching and teaching about religion, and manners of respecting traditional values. In his ethnographic observation of religious life among the Muslim population in Soviet Central Asian republics, including the Tajik SSR,

Poliakov highlights the spaces for transmitting knowledge of Islam: family-*mullo*s, *mazor*s (shrines) and mosques. As can be seen, parents and religious figures (*mullo*s or *otyn*s) remains at the centre of this space.[2] While the archives do not provide a detailed record of the content of the preaching and teaching of the religious figures, the oral sources for this thesis have revealed how Islamic knowledge was spread through clandestine teaching and oral performance, such as *maddohkhoni* in the case of Ismailis. According to most of my interviewees, it was it was for the parents and elders was to raise their children as *boadab* (an ethical person) and *mu'min musulmon* (literally, a believing Muslim). This latter term was used also in relation to a faithful person who had to act ethically, be compassionate to all, believe in good deeds reward, and to live a life without deceiving others.

On a social level, religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan employed different strategies to adapt to Soviet state policy. At times they appeared to be an influential social actor in their respective localities, even raising their voices vis-à-vis the decisions of the local government authorities. What empowered the emergence of the post-war generation of religious figures, especially the registered *khalifa*s and *domullo*s in this province, as dynamic social actors in their communities? An analysis of the archives and oral sources shows that the generation of the individuals serving as clergy from 1950s to the mid 1980s were very aware of their rights as believing citizens, as well being informed about state policy towards religion. Generally, as the CARC reports from Gorno-Badakhshan noted how registered *khalifa*s and *mullo*s expressed their readiness to cooperate with the authorities in theory, thereby displaying their loyalty to the Soviet government. The records of the discussions of the commissioners with the religious figures reveal that the latter praised the progress and achievements of Soviet state. Praise about the Soviet state and its development was also expressed in the poems written by some *khalifa*s, *okhon*s and *mullo*s.[3]

The CARC commissioners did not reveal the regular tensions between the registered and unregistered religious figures in Gorno-Badakhshan. On the contrary, for other parts of the

[2] Sergei P. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia* (London, 1992), pp. 68-69.

[3] Many of the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s produced autobiographic, didactic and devotional poetry and eulogies (*marsiia*) on the death of their family members. At the same time they also praised the Soviet state and its improved life style in their poetry. For samples of the poetry written by some *khalifa*s and *mullo*s, see La'ljubai Mirzohasan and Alidodi Charoghabdol, ed., *Tazkirai adiboni Badakhshon* (Khorog, 2007).

Tajik SSR the commissioners observed frequents tensions and disputes between the itinerary *mullo*s and the registered *imom-khatib*s, ordinary *imom*s and other staff of the registered mosques. Disputes between the Ismaili clergy over ritual performance however came to the surface during the relatively tolerant years of state policy towards believers in the mid 1950s. However, these disputes were far less frequent in comparison to scores of *fatwa*s that SADUM issued banning the activities of the numerous *mullo*s and *ishan*s who organised shrine visitation, as well as communal prayers and faith-healing on the occasions of religious festivals in the unregistered mosques, in parts of the Tajik SSR and other Soviet Central Asian republics.[4] Hence, it can be argued that the absence of a central religious administration such as SADUM in Gorno-Badakhshan lessened the degree of tension between registered and unregistered religious figures in this province.

The lack of religious administration in Gorno-Badakhshan meant that the challenges to control the activities of the *khalifa*s and *mullo*s were even greater. At the central level neither the council nor Communist Party authorities responded to the request by the CARC commissioner in the Tajik SSR to open a religious administration or to appoint a senior religious supervisor for the Ismaili *khalifa*s in Gorno-Badakhshan. At the provincial level, the commissioner also rejected similar suggestions by the *khalifa*s to establish a connection between the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan and the office of the Ismaili Imam abroad. For instance, Olimshoev Shoabdullo, the official *khalifa* of Khorog, asked the CRA commissioner Nayimov about the possibility of believers requesting the *oblispolkom* of Gorno-Badakhshan to allow them to visit the office of the Ismaili Imam and to receive *farmon*s from him. In response, Nayimov noted to the *khalifa* the letter and verse of the Soviet legislation dealing with the separation of church from state. The commissioner stated to the *khalifa* that the state would not interfere in religious affairs, and neither was there any need for the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan to send a delegation to the Aga Khan to receive instructions from him.[5]

Despite the absence of external links and a centralised religious institution or hierarchy, some of the Ismaili *khalifa*s, *mullo*s, and even the secular educated strata, had some awareness of news about the leadership of the Ismailis and some of the developments concerning the lives of their fellow-believers abroad. From the mid-1960s, articles started

[4] See Bakhtiiar Babadzhanov, 'O fetvakh SADUM protiv 'neislamskikh obychaev', in A. Malashenko and M. Bril Olkott, ed., *Islam na postsovetskom prostranstve: vzgliad iznutri* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 170-184.

[5] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (13 February 1972), p. 55.

appearing first in the leading atheist journals in the Soviet Union such as *Nauka i Religia* and then in the local press in the Tajik SSR, discussing the life and activities of the 49th Imam of the Ismailis, Shah Karim al-Husaini, Aga Khan IV.[6] Recent studies have highlighted the role of Communist Party leaders in Gorno-Badakhshan and the editor of the provincial newspaper of *Badakhshoni Soweti* in republishing these articles.[7] The report of the CRA commissioner, at that time indicated how the Ismaili clergy in Gorno-Badakhshan perceived the publication of the articles on their Imam. Nayimov for instance, noted that these articles were being published in the Soviet press as part of its ongoing criticism of the activities of religious leaders, in this case the Ismaili Imam. However, he mentioned that Ismaili clergy in Gorno-Badakhshan used these articles as a tool to propagate the notion that their Imam was even recognised by the Soviet government, and that even the Soviet press were writing positively about his wealth and glory.[8]

Some few distinct features of the religious life of Muslims in Gorno-Badakhshan differentiated their experience of state policy from that of their fellow believers in other parts of the USSR. One feature was that religious activity in Gorno-Badakhshan mainly revolved around the activity of religious figures not connected to the mosques and religious administration such as SADUM. In the absence of these two institutions, i.e., the mosque and spiritual directorate, the burden of organising ritual performance fell on the individual religious figures. The assessment, monitoring and regulating of religious activity was led by the CARC commissioners and the local government authorities.

A second feature is that the context of ritual performance was distinct due to the presence of the two Muslim communities in this province. What again made the ritual performance among the Muslim communities in Gorno-Badakshhan different was its unclear legal recognition and status. The legitimacy of Muslim practice, among the Sunni population of

[6] See articles by S. Levin, 'Finansovaia imperiia Aga Khana IV', *Nauka i religiia,* 8 (1971), pp. 58- 60; I. Davydov, 'Zemnoi rai Aga Khana', *Nauka i religiia*, 12 (1966), pp. 48-49 ; L. Sergeev, ' Imperiia Aga Khana IV', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* , 9 (1965), pp. 22-23 and its Tajik translation ' Imperiiai Oghokhoni IV', *Sadoi Sharq,* 12 (1965), pp. 48-49.

[7] See notes in Shohkhumorov's study of *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma* (Moscow, 2008), pp. 107-108 on Nazarshoev Moyonsho (1929-1994), the first secretary of the Communist Party Committee of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast from 1963 to 1970 who agreed that the article about the Ismaili Imam could be published in the newspaper *Badakhshoni Soweti*. For copies of the articles about the Ismaili Imam published in the Soviet press, see also Q. Alamshoev, *Pomir 1937* (Dushanbe, 2012), pp. 249-287.

[8] GA GBAO, f. 110, op. 3, d. 7, (10 February 1971), p. 104.

Central Asia was confirmed by the fact it had to be performed by the SADUM supervised religious figure in registered mosques in the Tajik SSR and other republics in Soviet Central Asia. In Gorno-Badakhshan, it remained unclear what kind of religious practice was considered legal even among the Sunni population, although in theory it was known that outside registered mosques the performance of any collective prayer was illegal. Regarding the ritual performed by the Ismailis, the commissioners continuously reported on instances of the performance of the *charogh-i rawshan* and the singing of devotional poems by the *maddohkhons*, but could not clearly declare these rites as the illegal religious activity. It emerged that the very performance of the collective prayer and *da'wat* during funerals inevitably made these rites legitimate in the eyes of the Soviet authorities and the bureaucrats representing the Council for the Religious Affairs.

The issues of which rituals were to be considered legitimate seem to have been solved when the rituals were performed by the official *khalifa*s and *domullo*s. When the problems of registering official religious figures were solved, the reports by the commissioners uncover also uncovered fewer occasions of violation of state legislation by the believers. From the 1970s onwards, the CRA documents also reveal fewer instances of the practice of religious rituals such as fasting, shrine visitation, and the celebration of *Id-i Ramazon* and *Id-i Qurbon*. On the contrary, atheist propaganda was spread by special experts, group campaigns, mass media and secular education to every corner of the Gorno-Badakhshan. In the opinion of the last CRA commissioner and in coverage by the local Soviet press, the Gorno-Badakhshan province was one of the best and success stories regarding implementation of atheist policy in the USSR. Finally, the most distinguishing feature of the evolution of religious life in this province was that each of the scattered, remote and scarcely-populated districts was affected differently by the unionwide religious policy. In their turn the existing kinship and social settings and even the different forms of conducting religious rites in each village and valley each offered a distinct milieu for the Muslim experience of state religious policy.

The data on the religious situation that is presented in the reports by the commissioners were not always based on their interviews with the *khalifa*s, *mullo*s and other religious figures. Information also arrived filtered through different channels, such as the various agents of local government and the Communist Party known as *aktiv*s. For this reason, any future anthropological study of the life of the Muslim community in a particular locale in Gorno-Badakhshan can bring into the light new details of the interactions between the various local actors: officials and religious figures, households, *kolkho*z and *sovkho*z

system with regard to Soviet state policy and Muslim practice. Historical research on the biography and works of the *khalifa*s, *domullo*s, *okhon*s, *maddohkhon*s and other prominent religious figures may yield new and interesting insights regarding religious history in Gorno-Badakhshan and other parts of the Tajik SSR in the Soviet period.

The detailed analysis of the archives in this thesis may contribute to a better understanding of the history, the successes and limitations of applying Soviet religious in Gorno-Badakhshan. It also uncovers the distinct strategies by which this central state policy was adjusted to local realities by the indigenous party state officials, who combined being Soviet with the practice of their Muslim faith. The findings of this thesis can also add to the corpus of academic studies on the religious history in Central Asia.

This analysis of the CARC and CRA archives has also thrown up potential ideas for future research on other kinds of documents in the Communist Party and Soviet State archives, in particular the reports by the State Security Committee on Islamic figures, rites and other religious institutions. It is equally important in the future to study the documents that have been preserved by the religious figures, including their writings, personal-notebooks, texts of sermons, prayers and manuals that they used for conducting religious rituals. These sources will allow researchers to throw light on some important aspects of the evolution of Muslim practices and institutions in the peripheral regions of Central Asia, such as the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of Tajikistan.

Glossary

*aktiv*s: individuals who regularly participated in events organised by the Communist party and government offices, and actively reported on the situation in the villages and districts; they were known as either *sel'skii aktivy* (rural activists) or (district activists) *raiaktivy*.

adab: manner, etiquette of behaviour.

azoim-khoni: healing through prayer.

brodiachie dukhovenstvo: itinerant clergy.

Chahor kitob: an introductory book of Arabic grammar used in religious schools in Soviet Central Asia.

charogh-noma: 'Book of Light', the poetic text recited during the ceremony of *charogh-i rawshan* on the final night of an Ismaili funeral in Central Asia.

charogh-i rawshan: 'Luminous Lamp', the religious ritual of kindling conducted on the final day Ismaili funerals in Central Asia.

da'wati fano: 'summons of demise', a ceremony that takes place on the final day of Ismaili funerals in Central Asia, which includes the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan.*

da'wati baqo: 'summons of eternity', another summoning ritual which in contrast to *da'wati fano* is held during the lifetime of an Ismaili. Its aim is to purify the soul of the person from the misdeeds of the material world and prepare him for the *olami baqo* (eternal world). This ritual was rarely practiced among the Ismaili population of Gorno-Badakhshan in the Soviet period.

dindoron: the stratum of the population who practiced religion.

domullo: honorific title for a religious teacher. The title was also used by the CARC commissioners to define the registered clergy among the Sunni Muslim community in Gorno-Badakhshan.

duokhon: an individual who recites prayers.

dukhovenstvo: clergy.

farmon: order, instruction. Refers to the instructions sent from the Ismaili Imam to his followers.

Haftyak: introductory grammar book for learning Arabic, widely used in religious schools in the Tajik SSR.

Hanafi: one of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, predominant in Central Asia.

hojji: one who has performed the Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

hujra: 'cell', a separate room where informal and underground religious teaching was conducted in the Tajik SSR and other parts of Soviet Central Asia.

ibtido'i: primary stage of education.

imom: religious figure responsible for leading prayers in Sunni mosques.

imom-khatib: the head of a registered mosque in the Tajik SSR, appointed by SADUM. The *mam-khatib* was responsible for leading the congregation during prayer, reading the sermon and speeches, and welcoming official delegations, especially foreign visitors, to the mosques.

imongui: in the Soviet period the term was used to refer to those individuals, especially elders who were reciting prayers.

intelligentsia: a stratum of Soviet citizens including teachers, doctors, and other educated groups.

ishan/ishon: an honorific title for religious figures including Sufi masters and Ismaili *pir*s.

ispolkom: executive committee of the local Soviet government in the provinces and districts.

jamo'at-khona: prayer house of the Ismaili community.

*kotib*s: copyist, were known also as master of calligraphy.

khalifa: a religious title for the individuals who prior to the establishment of the Soviet government served as the deputy of the *pir*s among the Ismailis of Badakhshan. In the Soviet period *khalifa* become the sole official religious figure for conducting required religious rites.

khatm-i Qur'on: completing the recitiation of the Qur'an. A communal prayer held on the occasion of completing the learning of the parts of the Qur'an by a man trained as *qori* .

khodataistva: an appeal to register a religious society or clergy.

kolkhoz: collective farm, the main unit of the Soviet agricultural economy that appeared during the collectivization campaign in the late 1920s and 1930s

Komsomol: shorter form of the All Union Leninist Young Communist League, the youth branch of the Communist Party.

khudoi: 'belonging to God', the practice of animal sacrificing, at feast times by Muslim communities in the Tajik SSR.

madhhab: system or school of religious law for Muslims.

maddoh: panegyric, a genre of devotional religious poetry among the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan.

maddohkhoni: the singing of devotional religious poetry among the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan.

madrasa: religious school, Islamic educational institution.

Mawlo also *mawlono*: literary lord, used as reference to the Ismaili Imam by his followers

muazzin: reciter of the *adhan* (Islamic call to prayer).

mullo: religious figure who conducts basic Islamic rites. The term was often used by the CARC commissioners to refer to unregistered religious figures who performed basic religious rites at life-cycle events and faith-healing.

murid: disciple or follower of a Sufi *pir* (master). It is also used as reference to the followers of the Ismaili Imam and *tariqa*.

obkom: shorter form of the *oblastnoi komitet partii* (provincial party committee).

oblispolkom: shorter form of the *oblastnoi ispolnitel'nyi komitet,* (executive committee of the provincial government in the Soviet Union.

okhon: teacher.

otun: female religious teacher (as used in the CARC reports).

pir: Sufi master. A *pir* was highest rank in the Ismaili religious hierarchy after the Imom.

Pir-i Shoh: form for the prayer text used by the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan in the Soviet period.

qasida: form of Arabic poetry, ode.

qozi (*qadi*): judge in the *shar'ia* law system. In the context of this study it refers to the representative of SADUM in the Tajik SSR.

qoziyot: the office of SADUM's representative in the Tajik SSR and other republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

qori: reciter of the Qur'an.

oshi pir: ritual observed in the month of Muharram in some villages among the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan to commemorate the death of the Shi'i Imom Husain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

raiaktiv: district activist.

raiispolkom: executive committee of the government of *rayon* (district) in the USSR.

raikom: district party committee.

registratsiia: act of registering and licencing official religious figures, societies and mosques by the local government and CARC representative. It granted them legal right to conduct religious rites that were required by the community.

Sharhi mullo: a commentary on Arabic grammar, textbook used in the religious schools in the Tajik SSR.

sel'sovet: village council, the smallest administrative unit in the Soviet state.

tariqa: way or path, referring to the mystical path followed by Sufi disciples. The word *tariqa* is also used by the Ismaiis for interpreting their religious doctrine"

tarobeh or namozi tarobeh: evening prayer during the month of Ramazon

tasbeh: a ritual of counting the rosary, and reciting the prayer during the funeral ritual. The rite introduced by the Panjabhai missionaries among the Ismailis of Gorno-Badakhshan in the 1920s in order to replace the ritual of *charogh-i rawshan*.

upolnomochennyi (plural *upolnomochennye*): plenipotentiary representative or commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) later the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in the union republics and provinces.

Appendices

Table 1: Educational Background of the Interviewees

Type of Informants	**No.**	**Level of Religious Education**			**Level of Secular Education**		
		pri[440]	**sec**	**high**	**pri**	**sec**	**high**
*khalifa*s	8		8		2	5	1
domullos	6			6		3	3
*imom-khatib*s	4			4		3	1
*maddohkhon*s	5		5			4	1
bibi-otuns	4		4			2	2
Researchers	5		2	3			5
Communist Party secretaries and CRA commissioners	5	3	1				**5**
Total	**37**	**3**	**20**	**13**	**2**	**19**	**18**

[440] Primary, secondary, and higher levels of education.

Table 2: Religious Figures in Gorno-Badakhshan (1 January 1950)

Districts	***khalifas***	***mullos***
Shugnan	8	11 *mullo*s 2 *ishan*s
Ishkashim	9	11
Rushan	9	13
Roshtqal'a	7	5
Bartang	8	9
Murgab		11
Wanj		30
Total	42	103 (2 ishans)

Source: GA GBAO, f.110.op.1, d.1, (14 February 1950), pp. 12-13

Table 3: Statistical Reports about Religious Personnel in Gorno-Badakhsan by 1951

Districts	**Type of clergy**	**Level of secular education**			**Level of religious education**			
	*khalif*as	high	sec	pri	h	Sec	pri	Without education
Shugnan	12			2	1	2	8	1
Roshtqal'a	7			2		4	2	1
Ishkashim	9			1	2	6	1	
Rushan	7			2		4	3	
Bartang	8			1		6	1	1
Total	43			8	3	22	15	3
Districts	***mullos***							
Shugnan	49		3	10	16	17	15	1
Roshtqal'a	26			3	3	11	11	1
Ishkashim	10			1	2	7	1	
Rushan	24			2	3	12	8	1
Bartang	8				1	4	2	1
Wanj (Sunni)	27				2	15	10	
Murgab (Sunni)	18			2	2	9	7	
Total	162	1	3	18	29	75	54	4

Source: GA GBAO, f. 110, op.1, d. 6, ‘Kvartal'nyi statisticheskii otchiot’, (1 April 1951), p. 1.

Table 4: Religious Figures in Gorno-Badakhshan (1960-1990)

years	***khalifas***	***domullos***	**unregistered**	**total**
1960	24	18	258	400
1965	26	11	213	250
1970	27	12	n/a	39
1975	27	14	n/a	41
1980	26	16	n/a	42
1985	26	16	n/a	42

Source: Adapted from Statistical Reports by CARC Commissioners in the GBAO (1950-1985)

Bibliography

Archives

Boigonii Markazii Dawlatii Jumhurii Tojikiston (BMDJT)

(Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan)

f. 1516 *Upolnomochennyi soveta po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR po Tadzhikskoi SSR* (1944-1966). Vakili Soveti Korhoi Dini dar nazdi Soveti Vazironi RSS Tojikiston

Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti, Khorog (1950-1985)

(State Archive of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Khorog) (1950-1985)

f. 110 *Upolnomochennyi soveta po delam religii pri sovete ministrov SSSR po GBAO Tadzhikskoi SSR.* Namoyandai Sovet oyid ba Korhoi Dini dar nazdi Soveti Wazironi SSSR dar WABK RSS Tojikiston.

Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF)

(State Archive of Russian Federation)

f. r-6991 Sovet po Delam Religii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR

Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI)

(Russian State Archive of Social and Political History)

f. 17 Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza (TsK KPSS)

Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI)

(Russian State Archive of Contemporary History)

f. 5 Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza (TsK KPSS)

Newspapers

Badakhshoni Soveti (1960-1980)

Farhangi Badakhshon (1992-93)

Farazh (2009-2012)

Millat (2009-2013)

Published Primary Sources

Arapov, Yurii Dmitrov. *Islam i Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo (1944–1990). Sbornik Dokumentov*. Moscow, 2011.

Karimov, Elyor and David, Abramson. *Religion Made Official: A Comprehensive Collection of Documents on Religion from the State Archives of Uzbekistan, 1920s– 1960s.* Almaty, 2009.

Secondary Literature

Abaeva, Tamara G. 'Ismaility pripamiria i sektantskoe dvizheniia Pandzhabaev v Pamirskom Ismailizme (20-30-e gody XX veka)' in Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respublika Uzbekistana, f. 2464, op. 1, d. 3, (12 February 1997), pp.1-13.

Abashin, Sergei and Bobrovnikov, V. (ed.). *Podvizhniki islama. Kul't sviatykh i sufizm v Srednei Azii i na Kavkaze*. Moscow, 2003.

Abashin, S. 'The Logic of Islamic Practice: A Religious Conflict in Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey* 25 (3), 2006, pp. 1-20.

——— 'A Prayer for Rain: Practicing Being Soviet and Muslim', *Journal of Islamic Studies* (2014), pp.1-23.

Abdullaev, Abdulghani. 'Islamic Tradition of Raising Children and its Applicability in Uzbekistan', *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1 (1980), pp. 5-8.

Akiner, Shirin. *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*. London, 1986.

——— *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?* London, 2001.

Alamshoev, Qurboniddin, *Shirinsho Shotemor v istorii vozrozhdeniia Tadzhikskoi gosudarstvennosti.* Dushanbe, 2013.

——— *Pomir 1937.* Dushanbe, 2012.

Altstadt-Mirhadi, Audrey. 'The Forgotten Factor: The Shi'i Mullahs of Pre-Revolutionary Baku', in C. Lemercier-Quelquejay et al., ed., *Passé turco-tatar, présent soviétique: Études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*. Paris, 1996, pp. 345-365.

Amonbekov, Ne'mat. 'Aspekty ismailitskoi spesifiki, kotorye nuzhno uchytivat pri formirovanii natsional'nogo gosudarstva v Tadzhikistane', in Jean-Nicolas Bitter et al., ed., *Confidence-Building between Islamists and Secularists-Tajik Experiment.* Hamburg, 2004. pp. 229–239.

Anderson, John. 'Islam in the Soviet Archives: A Research Note', *Central Asian Survey*, 13 (3) (1994), pp. 384-394.

——— *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States.* Cambridge, 1994.

———'Social, Political, and Institutional Constraints on Religious Pluralism in Central Asia', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 17, 2 (2002), pp. 181-196.

Antonenko, B. A. 'Sotsialisticheskie agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti', in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana*, pp. 220-53.

Arabov, Oumar. ‘Religion in Tajikistan: A Decade after the Break-Up of the USSR’, *Central Asian Survey*, 22, 3 (2003), pp. 339-342.

Atkin, Muriel. *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan.* Philadelphia, 1989.

——— ‘The Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan’, *Middle East Journal*, 4 (1989), pp. 605-618.

Babadjanov, Bakhtiiar and Muzaffar Kamilov, ‘Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the beginning of the “Great Schism” among the Muslims of Uzbekistan’, in Dudoignon Stephane and Komatsu Hisao, ed., *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia* (*Early Eighteenth to the Late Twentieth Centuries*). London, 2001, pp. 195-218.

Babadzhanov, Bakhtiiar. ‘O fetvakh SADUM protiv ‘neislamskikh obychaev’, in A. Malashenko and M. Bril Olkott, ed., *Islam na postsovetskom prostranstve: vzgliad iznutri*. Moscow, 2001, pp. 170-184.

Bakhtiyorov, Mamadali. *Ta’rikhi Rushon*. Dushanbe, 2013.

Bennigsen, Alexandre and Lemercier-Quelquejay, Chantal. ‘Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR,’ *Religion in Communist Lands,* 3 (1978), pp. 153-161.

Bennigsen, Alexandre and Wimbush S. Enders. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*. Berkeley, 1985.

——— *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*. Bloomington, 1986.

Berg, Gabrielle Rachel van den. *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study on the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan.* Wiesbaden, 2004.

Bergne, Paul. *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. London, 2007.

Bertel's, Andrei E and Baqoev Muhammadwafo. *Alfavitnii catalog rukopisei obnaruzhennikh v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Autonomnoi Oblasti ekspeditsie 1959-1963 gg* (*Alphabetic Catalogue of Manuscripts Found by 1959-1963 Expedition in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region*), ed. B. G. Ghafurov and A. M. Mirzoev. Moscow, 1967.

Bleuer, Christian. 'State-building, Migration and Economic Development on the Frontiers of Northern Afghanistan and Southern Tajikistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 3 (2012), pp. 69-79.

Bliss, Frank. *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs* (*Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan*). London, 2006.

Boiko, Vladimir. 'On the Margins of Amanullah Era in Afghanistan: The Shughnan Rebellion of 1925', *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 7 (2002), pp. 67-78.

Braker, Hans. 'Soviet Policy toward Islam', in Andreas Kappeler, Gerhard Simon, Georg Brunner and Edward Allworth, ed., *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*. Durham, 1989, pp. 157-182.

Brower, Daniel. *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire*. London, 2003.

Bubnova, Mira. (ed.). *Istoriia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti,* vol. 1, *S drevneishikh vremen do noveishogo perioda*. Dushanbe, 2005.

Bushkov, Valentin and Dmitri Mikulskii, *Anatomiia grazhdanskoi voiny v Tadzhikistane. Etno-sotsialnye protsessy i politicheskaia bor'ba, 1992-1996*. Moscow, 1997.

Crews, Robert B. *For Prophet and Tsar, Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*. London, 2006.

Cushman, O. Thomas. 'Ritual and Conformity in Soviet Society', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 2 (1988), pp. 162-180.

Daftary, Farhad. *The Isma'ilis: their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge, 2007.

——— *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*. London, 2011.

Davydov, I. 'Zemnoi rai Aga Khana', *Nauka i religiia*, 12 (1966), pp. 48-49.

Davydov, A. S. *Etnicheskaia prinadlezhnost' korennogo naseleniia Gornogo Badakhshana* (*Pamira*). Dushanbe, 2005.

Dawlatbekov, Lolo. *Hunari badeii sukhanwaroni Badakhshon*. Dushanbe, 2004.

——— *Shohfitur-Adibi Donishmand*. Dushanbe, 2012.

Dawlatbekov, Niyozbek. *Doislamskie verovania naselenia zapadnogo Pamira*. Dushanbe, 1995.

——— *Osveshenie Ismailizma na Pamire v trudakh Russkykh dorevoliutsionnyx isledovatelei*. Dushanbe, 1995.

Degtiarenko, N. D. *Razvitie sovetskoi gosudarstvennosti v Tadzhikistane.* Moscow, 2006.

DeWeese, Devin. 'Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union*', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3 (2002), pp. 298-330.

——— 'Survival strategies: Reflections on the Notion of Religious 'Survivals' in Soviet Ethnographic Studies of Muslim Religious Life in Central Asia', in Florian Muhlfried and Sergei Sokolovskii, ed., *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia*. Zurich, 2011, pp. 35-58.

Dodikhudoev, Khayolbek. *Mazhabi ismoiliya wa mohiyati ijtimoii on.* Dushanbe. 1967.

——— *Ocherki filosofii ismailizma.* (*Obshaia kharakteristika filosofskoi doktriny X-XIV vv*). Dushanbe,1976.

——— *Filosofiia krest'ianskogo bunta. O roli srednevekovogo Ismailizma v razvitii svobodomislia na musulmanskom Vostoke.* Dushanbe, 1987.

——— *Ismoiliya wa ozodandeshii Sharq.* Dushanbe, 1989.

Dragadze, Tamara. 'The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism', in C. M. Hann, ed., *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice.* London, 1993, pp. 141-157.

Dudoignon, A. Stephane and Komatsu Hisao (ed.). *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia.* London, 2001.

Dudoignon, A. Stephane. 'From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to Independence (1955–91)', *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 53-80.

Dudoignon, Stephane and Christian Noack, (ed.), *Allah's Kolkhozes: Migration, de-Stalinization, Privatisation and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm* (*1950s-2000s*). (forthcoming).

Elnazarov, Hakim and Sultonbek Aksakolov. 'The Nizari Ismailis of Central Asia in Modern Times', Daftary, ed., *Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*. London, 2011, pp. 45-75.

Elnazarov, Hakim. 'The Luminous Lamp: The Practice of *Chirāgh-i Rawshan* among the Ismailis of Central Asia', in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, ed., *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law*. (forthcoming).

Emadi, Hafizullah. 'State, Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tadjikistan', *Central Asian Survey*, 4 (1994), pp. 565-570.

Emel'ianova, Nadezhda. (ed.). *Pamirskaia ekspeditsiia.* Moscow, 2006.

——— *Darvaz: religioznaia i kul'turnaia zhizn' Tadzhiksko-Afganskogo prigranich'ia.* Moscow, 2007.

Exnerova, Vera. 'Caught between the Muslim Community and the State: The Role of the Local Uzbek Authorities in Ferghana Valley, 1950s-1980s', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1 (2006), pp.101-112.

Faridun, Habib. 'Jamoat-khonai Ismoilion', *Sadoi Mardum*, (6 June 1991).

Ferrando, Olivier. ‘Soviet population transfers and interethnic relations in Tajikistan: assessing the concept of ethnicity’, *Central Asian Survey*, 1 (2011), pp. 39-52

Frank, Allen J. *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780-1910.* Leiden, 2001.

Gavriliuk Alexandr and Viktor Yaroshenko, *Pamir*. Moscow, 1987.

Ghafurov, Bobojon. ‘Aga Khan (Glava sekty ismailitov’, *Bezbozhnik* , 11 (1940), pp. 8-10.

Ghashyoni, Hoji Rustam. *Dostoni zindaginomai eshoni Abdulkhalili Abdulmajid*. Dushanbe, 2011.

Gross, Jo-Ann, (ed.). *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change*. Durham, 1992.

——— ‘The Polemic of “Official” and “Unofficial” Islam: Sufism in Soviet Central Asia’, in de Jong Frederick and Berndt Radtke, ed., *Islamic Mysticism Contested. Thirteen Centries of Controversies and Polemics*. Leiden, 1999, pp. 520-540.

Habibov, Amirbek. *Az ta’rikhi adabiyoti tojik dar Badakhshon*. Dushanbe, 1975.

Harris, Colette. *Muslim Youth: Tensions and Transitions in Tajikistan*. Oxford, 2006.

Hazrati, Muhammadqul and Sayidiyon Ismatulloh. *Islom: rawiya, mazhab wa firqahoi on* (*Ma’lumotnoma*). Dushanbe, 1992.

Heathershaw, John and Edmund Herzig (ed.). *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood.* London, 2013.

Humphrey, Caroline. *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm.* Cambridge, 1983.

Iskandarov, Bahodur. *Vostochnaia Bukhara i Pamir vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka.* Dushanbe, 1963.

——— *Istoriia Pamir.* Khorog, 1996.

Iskandarov, Bahodur and Yusupov, Shohyoqub. 'Politiko-administrativnoe i sotsial'noe ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Pamira nakanune velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revolutsii', in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* . Dushanbe, 1985.

Iloliev, Abdulmamad. *The Ismaili-Sufi Sage of Pamir: Mubarak-i Wakhani and the Esoteric Tradition of the Pamiri Muslims.*Cambria, 2008.

——— '*Pirship* in Badakhshan: The Role and Significance of the Institute of the Religious Masters (*pir*s) in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Wakhan and Shughnan', *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, 2 (2013), pp. 155-175.

Kalandarov, Tokhir. *Shughnantsy (istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie).* Moscow, 2005.

——— 'Religiia v zhizne pamirtsev XX veka' in N. Emelianova, ed., *Pamirskaia ekspeditsiia.* Moscow, 2006, pp.101-111.

Karamshoev, Dodikhudo. *Olimoni soveti dar borai Pomir*. Dushanbe, 1975.

Kehl-Bodrogi, Kristzina. *Religion is not Strong Here: Muslim Religious Life in Khorezm after Socialism.* Berlin, 2008.

Keller, Shoshana. *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1911-1941*. London, 2001.

Kemper, Michael. *Studying Islam in the Soviet Union: Inaugural Lecture*. Amsterdam, 2009.

Kemper Michael, Raoul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth, (ed.). *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and its Successor States.* London, 2010.

Khalid, Adeeb. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia.* Berkeley, 2007.

——— 'Being Muslim in Soviet Central Asia, or an Alternative History of Muslim Modernity', *Journal of Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 2 (2007), pp. 123-143.

Khariukov, Leonid N. *Anglo-russkoe sopernichestvo v Tsentralnoy Azii yi Ismailizm*. Moscow, 1995.

Khokirohi, Muhammad. *Hazrati pir wa sukhane chan dar peromuni 'dil ba yoru dast ba kor'.* Dushanbe, 2010.

Kisliiakov, Nikolai and Pisarchik Antonina, (ed.). *Tadzhiki Qarategina i Darvaza*, Dushanbe, 1966.

Klimovich, Liutsian I. *Islam*. Moscow, 1965.

Koen, Benjamin D. *Beyond the Roof of the World.* Oxford, 2009.

Lashkariev, Amrisho. 'Pokhoronno-pominalnaia obriiadnost' Bartangtsev (konets XIX-XX vv)', unpublished candidate thesis. Moscow, 2007.

Lane, Christel. *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society-the Soviet Case*. Cambridge, 1981.

Levin, Sergey F. 'Finansovaia imperiia Aga Khana IV', *Nauka i religiia,* 8 (1971), pp. 58-60.

Levin, Theodore. *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God.* New York, 1996.

Luehrmann, Sonja. *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic.* Bloomington, 2011.

——— 'A Multireligious Region in an Atheist State: Unionwide Policies Meet Communal Distinctions in the Postwar Mari Republic', in Catherine Wanner, ed., *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine.* New York, 2012. pp. 272-301.

Maiskii, P. M. 'Sledi drevnikh verovanii v pamirskom ismailizme', *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, 3 (1935), pp. 50-58.

Malashenko, Aleksei (ed.). *Islam v SNG*. Moscow, 1998.

——— and Martha Brill Olcott (ed.). *Islam na postsovetskom Prostranstve: Vzglad Iznutri.* Moscow, 2001.

——— 'Religious and Political Change in Soviet Moslem Regions', in Vitaly Naumkin, ed., *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: a Post-Soviet Critique.* Reading, 1993, pp. 162-175.

Manz, Beatrice Forbez, 'Muriel Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan*', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1991), pp. 471-473.

Marsh, Christopher. *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival*. London, 2011.

Mavliutov Rashid and Madzhidov Radzhab. *Islam.* Dushanbe, 1980.

Mastibekov, Otambek. *Leadership and Authority in Central Asia: The Ismaili Community in Tajikistan* (forthcoming).

Meeker, Michael E. *A Nation of Empire, The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity.* London, 2002.

Meyer, Will. *Islam and Colonialism: Western Perspectives on Central Asia.* London, 2002. Monogarova, Lidiia Fedorovna. *Preobrazovaniia v bity i kul'ture pripamirskikh narodnostei*. Moscow, 1972.

Monogarova, L. F. 'Etnicheskii sostav i etnicheskie protsessy v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Oblasti Tadzhikskoi SSR', in A. N. Zelinskii, ed., *Strany i narody vostoka,* vol. 16, *Pamir*. Moscow, 1975, pp. 174-191.

Monogarova, Lidiia and Muhiddinov Ikromiddin. 'Etnograficheskoe izuchenie Sovetskogo Badakhshana', in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana.* Dushanbe, 1985, pp. 352-384.

Monogarova, L. F. 'Assimiliatsiia i konsolidatsiia pamirskikh narodov', in V. I. Bushkov, ed., *Sredniaziatskii etnographicheskii sbornik*: Volume 4, *Pamiati Vladimira Nikolaevicha Basilova*. Moscow, 2001, pp. 47-55.

——— ‘Piatdesiat let s narodami Pamira’, *Ethnographicheskoe obozrenia*, 4 (2003), pp. 119-136.

Muhiddinov, Ikromiddin. *Relikty doislamskikh obychaev i obriiadov u zemledel'tsev Zapadnogo Pamira, (XIX-nachalo XX vv),* Vol. 1, Dushanbe, 1984.

Nazarov, Alowiddin. Istoriia religioznoi zhizni musul'man Tadzhikistana v 1941-1991gg. unpublished candidate thesis. Dushanbe, 2004,

Nazarshoev, M. N. ‘Pobeda velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii i ustanovlenie Sovetskoi vlasti na Pamire’ in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana*. Dushanbe, 1985, pp. 68-95.

———‘Dobrovol'noe vkhozhdenie Pamira v sostav rossii i ego progressivnoe znachenie’, in Masov ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana* (Dushanbe, 1985), pp. 36-66.

Niyazi, Aziz. ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’ in V. Naumkin, ed., *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia, a Post-Soviet Critique.* Reading, 1993, pp. 262-289.

Niyozov, Sarfaroz. ‘Shi'a Ismaili Tradition in Central Asia: Evolution, Continuities and Changes’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 6 (24), 2003, pp. 39-46.

Ob Ismailizm. Otdel Propagandi yi Agitatsii SK KP (b) Tadzhikistana. Dlia sluzhebnogo pol'zovaniia. Stalinabad, 1943.

Odilbekova, R. ‘Kul'tura zapadnogo Pamira v kontse XIX-nachale XX vv’, in M. S. Asimov, ed., *Pamirovedenie.* 2nd edition, Dushanbe, 1985, pp. 7-22.

Olimova, Saodat. ‘Religioznogo obrazovanie v Tadzhikistane (Obzor situatsii i recomendatsii)’, in Jean-Nicolas Bitter et al., ed., *Confidence-Building between Islamists and Secularists-Tajik Experiment.* Hamburg, 2004, pp. 336-356.

Olimova, S and Olimov, M. (ed.). ‘Musul'manskoe dukhovenstvo v sredneaziatskikh obshestvakh’ in their *Musul'manskie lidery: sotsial'naia rol' i avtoritet*. Dushanbe, 2003.

Pirumshoev, H and Sh. Yusufbekov. (ed.). *Istoriia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblast,* vol. 2, *Noveishaia Istoriia.* Dushanbe, 2005.

Pirumshoev, H, ed., *Ta’rikhi Darwoz* Dushanbe, 2011.

Plekhanov, Sergei. *Raskrytaia ladon': Aga Khan i ego muridy.* Moscow, 2006.

Poliakov, Sergei. *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*. Translated by A. Olcott. New York, 1992.

——— ‘Modern Soviet Central Asian Countryside: Traditional Forms of Property in a Quasi-Industrial System’, in Vitaly Naumkin, ed., *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia, a Post-Soviet Critique.* Reading, 1993, pp. 144–161.

Qurbonshoev, Alowatsho. *Wakhon osorkhonai ta’rikh*. Dushanbe, 2009.

Radzhabov, Soleh and Shergaziev, Musoiabsho. ‘Sozdanie i razvitie Sovetskoi gosudarstvennosti v Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtanomnoi Oblasti’, in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana*. Dushanbe, 1985, pp. 115-136.

Rahnamo, Abdullo. *Ulamoi islomi dar Tojikiston.* Dushanbe, 2009.

Rey, Terry. *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy.* London, 2007.

Roy, Olivier. *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. London, 2000.

Ro'i, Yaacov. *Islam in the Soviet Union: from World War II to Perestroika.* London, 2000.

——— 'The Task of Creating the New Soviet Man: "Atheistic Propaganda" in the Soviet Muslim Areas', *Soviet Studies*, 1 (1984), pp. 35-51.

Said, M. 'Kadri Shurawi', *Millat* (1 May 2012), p. 4.

Saidbaev, Talib S. *Islam i obshchestvo: Opyt istoriko-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia.* Moscow, 1984.

Saroyan, Mark. 'The Reinterpretation and Adaptation of Soviet Islam' in Edward W. Walker ed., *Minorities, Mullahs and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union*. Berkeley, 1997, pp. 64-94.

——— 'Rethinking Islam in the Soviet Union', in Susan Gross Solomon, ed., *Beyond Sovietology: Essays in Politics and History*. Armonk, 1993, pp. 23-52.

Sartori, Paolo. 'Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia', *Die Welt des Islams*, 50 (2010), pp. 315-334.

Semenov, Alexandr A. 'Is oblasti religioznykh verovanii Shugnanskikh Ismailitov', *Mir Islama*, 4 (1912), pp. 523-564.

Sergeev, L. 'Imperiia Aga Khana IV', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* , 9 (1965), pp. 22-23

——— 'Imperiiai Oghokhoni IV', *Sadoi Sharq*, 12 (1965), pp. 48-49.

Shakarmamadov, Nisormamad. *Ostonho-osori ta'rikh wa farhangi mardum: tadqiqi ziyoratgohoi kuhistoni Badakhshon.* Khorog, 2010.

——— *Sunnathoi nawruzi dar Badakhshon.* Dushanbe, 2011.

Shakarmamadov and Nazardod Jonboboev, *La'li Kuhsor.* Khorog, 2003.

Sharifov, Khudoi. 'Ehyoi adabiyoti mazhabi dar Tojikiston', *Safinai Umed*, 30 (2003), pp. 4-7.

Sharifov, V and D. Khushqadamov. *Lughat- ma'lumotnomai ateist.* Dushanbe, 1985.

Shohkhumorov, Abusaid. *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma.* Moscow-Dushanbe, 2008.

Shohzamoniddin Shohhusayn, Adim. *Ashki hasrat*. Rawalpindi, 1380.

——— *Adimi du sohil.* Khorog, 1999.

Shoinbekov, Alowiddin. 'Traditsionnaia pogrebal'no-pominal'naia obriiadnost' ismailitov zapadnogo Pamira (konets XIX-nachalo XXI vv)', unpublished candidate dissertation. St. Petersburg, 2007.

Shorish, Mobin. 'Traditional Islamic Education in Central Asia prior to 1917' in Lemercier-, Quelquejay, Chantal and Gills Veinstien, and Wimbush S. Enders, ed., *Passe Turko-Tatar, Present Soviétique*. Paris, 1986, p. 317-43.

Stanishevskii, Andrei B. (ed.). *Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov po istorii Pamira i Ismailizmu*. Moscow-Leningrad, 1933).

Stephan, Manja. 'Education Youth and Islam: The Growing Popularity of Private Religious Lessons in Dushanbe', *Central Asian Survey*, 4 (2010), pp. 469 -483.

Steblin-Kamenskii, Ivan Mikhailovich. *Vakhan rannim letom. Pamirskii dnevnik*. Leningrad, 1976.

——— 'Povsednevnaia i ritual'naia pishcha Wakhantsev', in A. N. Zelinskii, ed., *Strany i narody vostoka*, volume 16, *Pamir*. Moscov, 1975, pp. 192-209.

Sultanova, Rozia. 'Qadiriya Dhikr in Fergana Valley', *Journal of the History of Sufism*, 2 (2000), pp. 531-538.

Tasar, Eren M. 'Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991', unpublished PhD thesis. Harvard, 2010.

Tawakalov, Haydarmamad. *An'anai madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon*. Dushanbe, 2013.

Tett, Gillian. 'Ambiguous Alliances: Marriage and Identity in a Muslim Village in Soviet Tajikistan', unpublished PhD thesis. Cambridge, 1996.

——— 'Guardians of the Faith: Gender and Religion in an (ex) Soviet Tajik Village', in C. El Solh and J. Marbro, ed., *Muslim Women's Choices*, London, 1994.

Thrower, James. 'Notes on Muslim Theological Education in the USSR in the 1980s', in Shirin Akiner, ed., *Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia.* London, 1994, pp. 175-198.

Vishnevskii, A. I and Nazarshoev, M. N. 'Istoriia obrazovaniia i ideino-organizatsionnogo ukrepleniia Gorno-Badakhshanskoi oblastnoi partiinoi organizatsii', in Masov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii Sovetskogo Badakhshana*. Dushanbe, 1985, pp. 137-182.

Walker, Edward W. ‘Islam, Islamism, and Political Order in Central Asia’, *Journal of International Affairs*, 2 (2003), pp. 21-42.

Walters, Philip. ‘A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy’, in S. P. Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union.* Cambridge, 1993, pp. 3-31.

Wanner, Catherine. (ed.). *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine.* New York, 2012.

Yoshiko Ashiwa, and Wank David, L. (ed.). *Making Religion Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China.* Stanford, 2009.

Yusufbekova, Zinat. *Sem'ia i semeinie byt Shughnantsev (konets XIX-nachalo XX v.).* Dushanbe, 2001.

Zarubin, Ivan Ivanovich. *Materialy i zametki po etnografii gornykh tadzhikov. Dolina Bartanga*. Petrograd, 1917.

Zelkina, Anna. ‘Islam and Security in the New States of Central Asia: How Genuine is the Islamic Threat?’, *Religion, State and Society*, 3-4 (1999), pp. 355-372.